00066569

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 16 January, 2016

ESSAYS

ON

PETRARCH.

BY

66569
ae.

UGO FOSCOLO.

B 580

IRREQUIETUS HOMO PERQUE OMNES ANXIUS ANNOS
AD MORTEM FESTINAT ITER. MORS OPTIMA RERUM.
PETRAR. AFRICA LIB. VI.

I. d. 16

LONDON

JOHN MURRAY

MDCCCXXIII.

66569.

LONDON
PRINTED BY S. AND R. BENTLEY, DORSET STREET.

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

BARBARINA LADY DACRE.

MADAM,

I am prompted to inscribe these pages with your Ladyship's name as well by my own gratitude, as by the opinion of those distinguished Literary Characters, whose kind assistance, surpassed only by yours, has enabled me to present my Essays to the English reader. With one voice and with national pride they pronounce, that your poetry has preserved the very spirit of Petrarch with a fidelity hardly to be hoped for, and certainly unattained by any other translation. And each of those who have contributed to this volume, resigning his portion of my acknowledgment, hopes the offering of it may be accepted by you alone.

I have the honour to remain,

Madam,

Your grateful and devoted Servant,

UGO FOSCOLO.

South Bank, Regent's Park,
January 1823.

CONTENTS.

AN ESSAY ON THE LOVE OF PETRARCH.

AN ESSAY ON THE POETRY OF PETRARCH.

AN ESSAY ON THE CHARACTER OF PETRARCH.

A PARALLEL BETWEEN DANTE AND PETRARCH.

APPENDIX.

I. *SPECIMENS OF PETRARCH'S LATIN POETRY.*

II. SPECIMENS OF GREEK AMATORY POETRY, FROM SAPPHO DOWN TO THE WRITERS OF THE LOWER EMPIRE.

III. A THEORY OF PLATONIC LOVE, BY LORENZO DE' MEDICI.

IV. COMPARATIVE DESCRIPTION OF WOMAN'S BEAUTY ACCORDING TO PLATONIC IDEAS, BY THE EARLY ITALIAN POETS.

V. PETRARCH'S UNPUBLISHED LETTERS IN ITALIAN.

VI. A LETTER, IN LATIN, OF DANTE'S LATELY DISCOVERED.

VII. TRANSLATIONS FROM PETRARCH, BY BARBARINA LADY DACRE.

AN ESSAY

ON THE LOVE

OF

PETRARCH.

AN ESSAY

ON THE LOVE

OF

PETRARCH.

FU FORSE UN TEMPO DOLCE COSA AMORE,
NON PERCH' IO SAPPIA IL QUANDO.
P. II. SON. LXXIII.

I. ALTHOUGH Petrarch has contrived to throw a beautiful veil over the figure of Love, which the Grecian and Roman Poets delighted in representing naked—it is so transparent that we can still recognize the same forms. The ideal distinction between two Loves sprang at first from the different ceremonies with which the ancients worshipped the CELESTIAL VENUS, who presided over the chaste loves of girls and wives; and the TERRESTRIAL VENUS, the avowed tutelar deity of the gallantries of ladies, who played a distinguished part in those times. In spite of the mystical and po-

litical allegories which ancient metaphysics and modern erudition have built on these two names, the popular distinction is constantly supported by the poets when they describe the manners of their age, and the worship of the two goddesses*. Whilst virtuous women lived in such close retirement, that they never appeared at banquets, and occupied apartments separate from those of the men,—artists, poets, philosophers, magistrates, priests, and all the fashionable world, held their circles in the houses of ladies who made an avowed traffic of their charms, and lent their persons to be the models of the statues with which the Grecian temples were adorned. Every body knows that Aspasia, who governed Pericles and educated Alcibiades, was a priestess of the Terrestrial Venus. These ladies have had influence enough to place themselves under the protection of the Celestial Venus also, by propagating the belief that they had only one lover, and that the sentiments with which they inspired all others were virtuous; and it was the political interest of their admirers themselves to spread this opinion amongst the people. Plato puts into the mouth of Socrates

* Theocriti Epigr. Callimachus et Catullus de Coma Berenices, sub fine. Proclus, in Ven. Hymn. 1. v. 7. 19.

every refinement of reasoning, to prove that it is possible to be devoted to a gallant woman without desiring her favours*.

II. We may, however, probably consider all that Plato makes his master say as apocryphal, except when the same things are repeated by Xenophon. These two great writers, whose rivality amounts almost to enmity, have each of them composed a treatise, under the title of The Banquet, in which they make Socrates discourse on Love. It is certain, therefore, that the new application to the ancient distinction between the two goddesses was originally of Socrates. But, in the Banquet of Xenophon, the object is not to deceive the Athenians, regarding the nature of those conversations which their great men held with the Aspasias of their time. Socrates' discourse aims at calling back to a sense of shame those of his fellow-citizens who were too passionate admirers of beauty in both sexes. "Beauty," he says, "is illuminated by a light which directs and invites me to contemplate the soul which inhabits such a form; and, if the soul be as beautiful as the body, it is impossible not to love it. But there can be no beauty of soul without purity; and the purity of those,

* Plato, Συμποσιον passim.

whom I love the most tenderly, makes me also a good man. Thus, in proportion as the object of your attachment becomes dear to you, as you discover new qualities in it, and as you find a pleasure in making others admire it, it is your interest to preserve it pure from stain. By corrupting the morals, you deform and debase the soul, the perfection of which you would exalt; and this deformity extends to the countenance also. I will not assert that there are two Venuses; but, since I see that there are temples consecrated to the *Celestial*, and others to the *Terrestrial* Venus, and that they sacrifice in the first with ceremonies more scrupulous and with victims more pure, *I presume* that the two goddesses do exist at least in their effects. *The vulgar Venus inflames the passions towards the body; the heavenly Venus inspires a love towards the soul, and incites to honest connexions and to virtuous actions**."

III. THE imagination of Plato has apparently seized upon these exhortations to exalt and support an ingenious theory of Love, of

* Εἰκάσαις δ' ἂν καὶ τοὺς ἔρωτας τὴν μεν Πάνδημον τῶν σωμάτων ἐπιπέμπειν· τὴν δ' Οὐρανίαν τῆς ψυχῆς τε καὶ τῆς φιλίας καὶ τῶν καλῶν ἔργων.—XENOPHON, Συμποσιον, sub fine.

which it will be sufficient to notice here that portion which constitutes the machinery of Petrarch's poetry:—"Our souls emanate from God, and unto him they return again. They are pre-existent to our bodies in other worlds. The most tender and the most beautiful inhabit Venus, the brightest and the purest of the planets, called the third heaven. They are more or less perfect, and the most perfect love those which are most perfect also. They are connected together in pairs by a predestined and immutable sympathy: without partaking of the sensual perturbations of the body, they are necessitated to follow it blindly, led by fatality or chance, for the procreation of the species. Each soul burns with the desire to find its companion; and, when they do meet together in their pilgrimage on earth, their love becomes so much the more ardent, because the matter by which they are enclosed prevents their re-union. On these occasions their pleasures, their sufferings, their ecstasies, are inexpressible: each endeavours to make itself known to the other; a celestial light burns in the eyes; an immortal beauty beams in the countenance; the heart feels less tendency to earth, and they mutually incite each other to the exaltation and purification of

their virtue. In proportion as they love each other, they are lifted towards God, who is their common origin; and, in proportion as they feel the pains of their exile upon earth, and their captivity in matter, they desire to be freed, in order that they may unite eternally in heaven."—Now, since the whole system is founded on the hypothesis, "that each soul has a predestined sympathy towards one other soul only"—and since each person imagines, "that the being to whom he is attached is the most perfect," it follows "that every platonic lover ought to strive always to attain to the highest degree of moral perfection."

IV. THESE opinions were brought into Italy through the means of the ancient Fathers of the Church; and some of the theologians, amongst others, Giovanni da Fabriano, who died the same year that Laura died, have written treatises to reconcile the doctrines of Plato with the Bible*. The friars turned them to good account, and, in citing the example of celebrated poets, preached that the souls of deceased ladies would be more readily received into heaven, if it were appeased by the

* Fabricius Med. et Inf. Lat. tom. IV. p. 74.

charities and prayers of their lovers.—"Francis Petrarch, who is still living," says a Dominican preacher, "had a spiritual mistress, to whom he owes all his glory: and, since her death, he has spent so much in charities to the church for masses, that, if she had lived as a profligate woman, they would have redeemed her from the hands of the devil: but it is said that she died devout*." Thus philosophy and religion conspired with the chivalrous manners of the times to flatter and embellish the most irresistible of all human propensities. Facility in yielding to love was the least equivocal mark of a benevolent mind: constancy, disinterestedness, and submission to the sex, were the most certain pledge of military valour and of heroism: beautiful poetry was no proof of the genius of the poet, but of the force of the pas-

* "Ma pur Messer Francesco Petrarca, che è oggi vivo, hebe un amante spirituale apelata Laura: però, poichè ella morì, gl'è stato più fedele che mai, et ali data tanta fama, che la sempre nominata, e non morirà mai. Et questo è quanto al corpo; po' li ha fatto tante limosine, et facte dire tante Messe et Orationi con tanta devotione, che s' ella fosse stata la più cattiva femina del mondo, l'avrebbe tratta dalle manî del Diavolo, benchè se raxona, che morì pure santa." —Two manuscript copies of these sermons, bearing the date and orthography of 1372, are quoted by Tiraboschi, Storia della Letteratura Italiana, vol. v. lib. 3.

sion by which he was inspired. Beauty, rank, the domestic virtues, had no merit, except as they were celebrated by the adoration of a lover and the passion of a poet. In the time of Petrarch, Agnese de Navarre, Comtesse de Foix, wrote some love-verses to Guillaume de Machaut, a French poet: he became jealous, and she sent her own confessor to him, to complain of the injustice of his suspicions, and to swear that she was still faithful to him. She required also of her lover to write and to publish in verse the history of their love; and she preserved at the same time, in the eyes of her husband and of the world, the character of a virtuous princess*.—The reputation, and perhaps the virtue, of the fair sex were protected by the COURS D'AMOUR, which were held for two ages throughout all France. They were at once the schools and the tribunals, where the prizes were decreed to the best poets and the most faithful lovers, where problems of gallantry were solved, where proceedings were instituted and individuals condemned. There the ladies officiated as judges, and from them there was no appeal. In spite of the ridicule which attaches to such an

* Mémoires de l'Academie des Inscriptions, vol. xx. p. 413.

institution, vanity and fashion made these tribunals (over which princesses sometimes presided, and in which husbands were not permitted to complain of the indifference of their wives) to be sought after and feared. The Comtesse de Champagne, daughter of Louis le Jeune, decided in her tribunal, *En amour tout est grace; et dans le mariage tout est necessité: par consequent l'amour ne peut pas exister entre gens mariés.* The Queen, to whom an appeal was made against such decisions, replied, *A Dieu ne plaise que nous soyons assez osées pour contredire les arrêts de la Comtesse de Champagne**.

V. It was in the midst of France, in the town where these customs and institutions were popular, and at the epoch when the *Jeux Floreaux* began to be celebrated in honour of the poets inspired by love—it was with a mind busied with the speculations which ancient philosophy had spread abroad, which the poetry of Italy had already adorned, and which religion had sanctified—it was with a disposition virtuous but restless, and impatient,

* The Della Crusca Academy quotes a manuscript, dated 1408, bearing the title of *Libro d'Amore*, where a great many of these decisions are registered.

for renown; with an imagination wandering in quest of a happiness independent on the instability of fortune, that Petrarch, at the age of twenty-three years, became enamoured of Laura, who had then hardly completed her nineteenth year. Having met her eyes for the first time in a church, he followed her in the street, still thinking of their uncommon radiancy and beauty, and gazing at a distance at the grace of her port, and at her hair falling in rich profusion of ringlets on her neck—

> Erano i capei d'oro all' aura sparsi,
> Che in mille dolci nodi gli avvolgea;
> E il vago lume oltre misura ardea
> Di que' begli occhi ———
> Non era l'andar suo cosa mortale,
> Ma d'angelica forma.

Poets, antiquaries, and travellers of all nations, amongst others the Archbishop Beccadelli, with Cardinal Sadoleto, and Cardinal Poole, then the legate of the province, searched all the spots in the country without finding out who Laura was, or whether she had ever existed. Meanwhile, innumerable writers published each an account of Petrarch and Laura, which at once augmented the stock of fiction under the mask of history and car-

ried away the generality of readers. The abbé de Sade, towards the year 1760, in examining his family archives at Avignon, brought to light some old testaments and contracts, which, strengthened by many allusions in the different works of Petrarch, led to the conclusion admitted as undeniable even by his Italian opponents*—"That Laura was the daughter of Audibert de Noves, and married in her eighteenth year to Hugh de Sade; and that Petrarch became acquainted with her about two years after her marriage."—Those who are still anxious to preserve the poet from the imputation of having sighed for the wife of another, reject the authority of documents; nay, a Scotch critic† contends that an abbreviation, to be found in a Latin manuscript, in which Petrarch says of Laura, *Corpus ejus crebris* PTBS *exhaustum*, ought to be interpreted *perturbationibus*—and if so, we might imagine that the constitution of Laura had sunk under *frequent afflictions*. But the more direct interpretation of PTBS is *partubus;* and the words *crebris, corpus, exhaustum*, combine more grammatically and more logi-

* Tiraboschi, Storia della Letteratura Ital. vol. v.

† Critical and Historical Essay on the Life and Character of Petrarch, Edinburgh, 1812.

cally with it, to express that her constitution was *exhausted* by *frequent child-bearing*. The terms *Mulier* and *Femina*, by which her lover continually designates her in Latin, instead of *Virgo* and *Puella;* and those of *Donna* and *Madonna* in Italian, signify more properly a married woman. *Donna* is also a general term; and being derived from *Domina*, it is, in poetry, an appellation of respect: but when it is opposed to *Giovine*, or *Vergine*, or *Donzella*, it signifies strictly a married woman, and the poet says of Laura,

La bella giovinetta ch' ora è donna.

VI. It appears that in conversing with her lover she mentioned with candour and delicacy the beauties of her youth, and the curiosity and envy they excited—

E quando io fui nel mio più bello stato,
Nell' età mia più verde, a te più cara,
Che a dir e a pensar a molti ha dato.

Her painters, however, owing perhaps to the infancy of their art, seem to have been little inspired with her beauty. To judge by Laura's early portraits, a polished forehead, with black eyes, contrasted with a fair complexion and golden hair, were the only rare ornaments she

had received from nature. Besides the want of harmony in their proportions, her features betray the conceit and the archness of a French countenance, neither enlivened with the attractive warmth of the Italians, nor the cheerful serenity of the English beauties. Her lover having never exactly described her, affords to the admirers of his poetry the pleasure of imagining Laura according to their own taste, and of estimating her personal endowments more by their effects, than by a distinct idea of their character. From some touches here and there in the different writings of Petrarch, it appears that her figure was less embellished with regularity and dignity, than with a graceful elegance. Her more powerful charms were derived from her sighs and her smiles, from the melody of her voice, from the sweet eloquence of her eyes—

Chi gli occhi di costei giammai non vide,
Come soavemente ella gli gira!

and above all, from the natural mobility of her countenance, on which the mystery of an habitual thoughtfulness was increased by the sudden succession of animation and paleness;

E il viso di pietosi color' farsi,
Non so se vero, o falso, mi parea.

Petrarch's person, if we trust to his biographers, "was so striking with beauties, as to attract universal admiration." They represent him "with large and manly features, eyes full of fire, a blooming complexion, and a countenance that bespoke all the genius and fancy that shone forth in his works*." Possibly Petrarch was not over vain of his exterior endowments; though it does not appear that modesty had ever interfered with his self-appreciation. "Without being uncommonly handsome," says he, in the Letter to Posterity, "my person had something agreeable in it in my youth†. My complexion was a clear and lively brown; my eyes were animated; my hair had grown gray before twenty-five, and I consoled myself for a defect which I shared in common with many of the great men of antiquity—for Cæsar and Virgil were gray-headed in youth; and I had a venerable air, which I was by no means very proud of‡." He then was miserable if a lock of his hair was out of order; he was studi-

* De Sade, Mémoires, vol. i.—Mrs. Dobson's Life of Petrarch.

† *Formâ non glorior excellenti, sed quæ placere viridioribus annis posset.* Ad Post.

‡ Senil. L. v. Ep. 3. *Claris comitibus me solabar.*

ous of ornamenting his person with the nicest clothes; and to give a graceful form to his feet, he pinched them in shoes that put his nerves and sinews to the rack *.

VII. His youthful propensities to love were cherished by a too early belief that fortune, fame, and the world, are unworthy friends; and that he could not find happiness but in the interchange of warm and generous feelings with very few persons;

Nè del mondo mi cal, nè di fortuna;
Nè di me molto: nè di cosa vile:
Nè dentro sento, nè di fuor gran caldo.
Sol due persone io chieggio.

He was born in the year 1304, at Arezzo, while his family was in banishment from Florence, having forfeited its property by the violence of a victorious faction, backed by the dark process of an inquisitorial tribunal. His parents sought refuge at Avignon, in the hope of providing for their children in the court of the Pope. Petrarch lost them both in his twenty-second year; and being no longer bound to

* Variarum Ep. 28.

study for their support, he abandoned all legal pursuit, and the trade

Di vender parolette, anzi menzogne.

His soul revolted at the idea of acquiring a science which would have reduced him to the dilemma, "either of becoming a rich rogue, or of being laughed at by the world for an honest madman, who had conceived the vain project of reconciling law, fortune, and conscience*." The young man, therefore, had recourse to the priestly habit, exposing however the profligacy of the ministers of God; despising preferment in a church so polluted; lamenting and groaning that he had no country but the land of his exile—

Dal dì ch' io nacqui in su la riva d'Arno,
Cercando or questa ed or quell' altra parte,
Non è stata mia vita altro che affanno†.

Being at once very poor and high-minded, the distressing conviction of the sudden reverses, of the humiliating and often useless cares, and

* Epist. ad Post.

† And in his early Latin Poetry,

Exul ab Italia furiis civilibus actus,
Huc subii, partimque volens, partimque coactus.
Hic nemus, hic amnes, hic otia ruris amœni:
Sed fidi comites absunt, vultusque sereni.
Hoc juvat, hoc cruciat. Carm. Lib. i. Epist. 6.

of the final vanity of human life, carried him away through ideal worlds, exclaiming at the same time "that this also was vanity and vexation of spirit." To muse and prey upon his illusions and feelings constituted his earliest, as well as his latest perpetual occupation—

The neighbours stared and sigh'd, yet bless'd the lad:
Some deem'd him wondrous wise, and some believed him mad.

For in his youth Petrarch mistrusted his own powers; and felt himself so dismayed by the immensity, the uncertainty, and the insufficiency of all human knowledge, that he was on the point of abandoning letters for ever, and implored the advice of a friend more advanced in years: "Shall I quit study? shall I enter into another course? Have pity on me, my father."—A few months after the date of his letter began his acquaintance with Laura. "Why wonder," says he, "at a sudden conflagration, when fuel needs only the spark?"—

Io che l'esca amorosa al petto avea,
Qual meraviglia se di subit' arsi?

The collection of his verses, compared with his correspondence, and such of his writings as he did not intend should become public, affords the progressive interest of a narrative, in

which we always identify the poet and the man: for he was careful in arranging his pieces according to the order of time; and often alludes to the occasion which gave them birth. Indeed many of the circumstances are so trifling in themselves, and poetical ornaments are so skilfully employed to conceal domestic events, that they hardly arrest the attention of readers warmed by the ardour of the sentiments, dazzled by the brilliancy of the images, astonished by the elevation of the conceptions, and led on by the variety and melody of the versification.

VIII. At first Petrarch saw in Laura only the most beautiful of women; one whom he was destined to love, and who inspired and ennobled his talents: he coveted glory only as it might secure her esteem and affection, and he hoped to have found happiness on earth*. He next discovered in her the form and the virtue of an angel—that his love burnt only to

* In his Dialogues with St. Augustin, a book in which he has poured out all his feelings, and which he entitled *The Secret Conflict of his Cares*, he confesses that he was more ardent in his desire of the *Laurel* Crown, on account of its affinity to the name of *Laura*.—Petrarchæ Operum vol. 1. pag. 403. Edit. Basil. 1581.

enlighten and purify his heart; to fix his mind; to harmonize those faculties, which would otherwise have been a prey to perpetual perturbation; to lift his desires and thoughts towards heaven: and that he might raise her above every earthly idea, he never explicitly mentions that she was bound to partake the bed of another. At last, however, he felt and confessed "that she was a woman; that he doated upon her form; that she was the only one who had ever appeared a woman in his eyes;"

Chiare, fresche, dolci acque
Ove le belle membra
Pose colei che sola a me par Donna;

and he was burning "with envy, jealousy, and love"—

D'amor, di gelosia, d'invidia ardendo.

He envied Pigmalion, "who could animate with soul and love the statue made by his own hands." But at the same time he seems not unaware that the fairest portion of his life was wasted in the superstitious worship of a Deity, which possibly deserved to be cast down upon the earth, whence his fatal fancy had raised it. He calls "the loftiness of Laura, pride; and

her aversion to every sort of baseness, affectation and prudery"—

Ed in donna amorosa ancor m'aggrada
Che'n vista vada altera, e disdegnosa;
Non superba, o ritrosa:
Amor regge suo imperio senza spada.

The illusions of a pure passion are succeeded by the desires of an impatient love, which escape, in expressions and lines too plain to be quoted, and which are not ordinarily observed, because Petrarch is traditionally read with sentimental prepossession. He was admitted but rarely into the house of Laura, and not till several years after their first meeting. "I grow old," says he, "and she grows old: I begin to despond; and yet it appears to me that time wears away slowly, till we may be permitted to be together without the fear that we should be lost"—

Ma sia che può; già solo io non invecchio.

IX. He now and then insinuates that he was justified in entertaining expectations which were often flattered and always disappointed—

E mi conforta, e dice che non fue
Mai come or presso a quel ch' io bramo e spero:
Io che talor menzogna, e talor vero
Ho ritrovato le parole sue
Non so s'il creda, e vivomi intra due.

Yet even from these passages it is not easy to determine what were Laura's real feelings: and it would seem that his own ardent wishes induced him to infer from some designed or tender expression of the eye, a promise which, however, never escaped her lips—

Let sailors gaze on stars and moon so freshly shining,
Let them that miss the way be guided by the light:
I know my Lady's smile, there needs no more divining;
Affection sees in dark, and Love has eyes by night.
OLD POEMS.

One of his sonnets might serve well for an artist to represent Petrarch and Laura at the moment that he is taking leave of her for a long time. Her countenance is obscured by her usual veil; and modesty and elevation of mind, tenderness, melancholy, mystery, and coquetry, are so interwoven, as not to leave very discernible the real state of her heart—whilst upon the countenance of her lover predominate the ecstasy of passion, and the intensity of the illusion, by which he thinks he reads clearly in the eyes of Laura, sentiments invisible to all around—

Quel vago impallidir che'l dolce riso
D'un amorosa nebbia ricoverse,
Con tanta maestade al cor s'offerse
Che gli si fece incontro a mezzo'l viso.

Conobbi allor; sì come in paradiso
Vede l'un l'altro; in tal guisa s'aperse
Quel pietoso pensier ch' *altri non scerse;*
Ma vidil' io, ch' altrove non m'affiso.
Ogni angelica vista, ogni atto umile
Che giammai in donna, ov' amor fosse, apparve,
Fora uno sdegno a lato a quel ch' i' dico.
Chinava a terra il bel guardo gentile;
E tacendo dicea, com' a me parve,
Chi m'allontana il mio fedele amico?

A tender paleness stealing o'er her cheek
Veil'd her sweet smile as 'twere a passing cloud,
And such pure dignity of love avow'd
That in my eyes my full soul strove to speak:
Then knew I how the spirits of the blest
Communion hold in heaven; so beam'd serene
That pitying thought, by *ev'ry eye unseen*
Save mine, wont ever on her charms to rest.
Each grace angelic, each meek glance humane,
That love e'er to his fairest votaries lent,
By this were deem'd ungentle cold disdain!
Her lovely looks with sadness downward bent,
In silence to my fancy seem'd to say,
Who calls my faithful friend so far away?—LADY DACRE.

The impatience of seeing Laura exaggerated to his fancy the distress in which he had abandoned her; but he had hardly returned, when he again met with the same cold reception, which compelled him to groan, to fret, to fear

the contempt of the world*—to depart once more, and to conceal the humiliation and agonies of his unrewarded love in the hermitage of Vaucluse:

> Solo e pensoso i più deserti campi
> Vo misurando a passi tardi e lenti—
> Altro schermo non trovo che mi scampi
> Dal manifesto accorger delle genti.

X. THAT it is possible to give a loose to the imagination, without alluring the mind into a labyrinth of errors and sorrows, is a position frequently maintained from the example of Petrarch and Laura, by those who have not as yet made the experiment upon themselves; and by those who wish to drive others out of the asylum either of tranquillity or of innocence—intending perhaps to teach them that virtue ought to be acquired by the sacrifice of our dearest inclinations—or, which is more often the case, with a tardy and everlasting repentance—

> Shall we desire to raise the sanctuary,
> And pitch our evils there?

The notion, however, that Laura had not

* Jam DUO LUSTRA gravem, fessâ cervice, catenam
Pertuleram INDIGNANS. Petrar. Carm. Lib. 1. Ep. 12.

been always inexorable is equally popular, especially with that portion which is at once the less courted and the more alarmed of the fair sex. It has its foundation upon those romantic traditions also which poets and travellers are eager to adopt. The inhabitants of the neighbourhood of Vaucluse point out the height where Laura's chateau was situated, from which she could converse with her lover by signals. The abbé Delille discovers the very grotto which afforded a secret retreat, and the tree which lent its shade to this happy couple:

Une grotte écartée avait frappé mes yeux:
Grotte sombre, dis-moi, si tu les vis heureux?
M'écria-je! Un vieux tronc bordoit-il le rivage?
Laure avait reposé sur son antique ombrage.—
JARDINS, Chant 3.

A lady goes still farther than the abbé:

Dans cet antre profond, où, sans d'autre témoins,
Laure sut par de tendre soins
De l'amoureux Petrarque adoucir le martyre;
Dans cet antre où l'amour tant de fois fut vainqueur
Il exprima si bien sa peine, son ardeur,
Que Laure malgré sa rigueur,
L'écouta, plaignit sa langueur,
Et fit peut-être plus encore.*

* MADAME DESHOULIÈRES, Epître sur Vaucluse.

Petrarch's own confession will never set this old question at rest. But as to meeting Laura at Vaucluse, he retired there, "in the hope," as he says, "to extinguish by solitude and study the flame which was consuming me. Unfortunate wretch! the remedy served only to exasperate the disease. My meditations were about her alone whom I wished to avoid*."—In another letter from Vaucluse he writes: "Here my eyes, which have dwelt too much on beauty at Avignon, can perceive nothing but the heavens, the rocks, and the waters. Here I am at variance with all my senses. Melodious words no longer delight my ears—I hear nothing but the lowing of cattle. On one side are the birds warbling—on the other are the waters roaring or murmuring. Nothing can be more agreeable—nothing more uncommon than my two gardens. I am angry that there should be any thing like them out of Italy. But the vicinity of Avignon poisons all†!" "When I think of her—and when is it that I do not think of her!—I look around my solitude, my eyes bathed in tears.—I feel that I am one of those unfortunate beings whose passion can feed on memory alone, who has no consolation but his tears; but who still desires to weep alone—"

* Epist. Famil. Lib. 8. Ep. 3. † Ib. Lib. 22. Ep. 8.

Amor col rimembrar sol mi mantiene—
Ed io son di quei che il pianger giovâ—
Ed io desio,
Che le lagrime mie si spargan sole.

XI. THE house of Petrarch has disappeared; nor can his frequent descriptions help antiquarians to discover the site of his gardens *; but the valley of Vaucluse is one of those works of nature, which five centuries have been unable to disturb. On leaving Avignon the eye of the traveller reposes on an expanse of beautiful meadow till he arrives on a plain varied by numerous vineyards. At a short distance the hills begin to ascend, covered with trees, which are reflected on the Sorga, the waters of which are so limpid, their course so rapid, and their sounds so soft, that the poet describes them truly when he says, "that they are liquid crystal, the murmurs of which mingle with the songs of birds to fill the air with harmony." Its banks are covered with aquatic plants, and in those places where the falls or the rapidity of the current prevent their being distinguished, it seems to roll over a bed of green marble. Nearer the source, the soil is sterile; and as the channel grows narrow, the waves break against the rocks, and roll in a torrent

* See Appendix, No. I.

of foam and spray, glittering with the reflection of the prismatic colours. On advancing still farther up the river, the traveller finds himself inclosed in a semicircular recess, formed by rocks inaccessible on the right, and abrupt and precipitous on the left, rising into obelisks, pyramids, and every fantastic shape, and from the midst of them a thousand rivulets descend. The valley is terminated by a mountain, perpendicularly scarped from the top to the bottom, and through a natural porch of concentric arches, he enters a vast cavern, the silence and darkness of which are interrupted only by the murmuring and the sparkling of the waters in a basin, which forms the principal source of the Sorga. This basin, the depth of which has never yet been fathomed, overflows in the spring, and it then sends forth its waters, with such an impetuosity as to force them through a fissure in the top of the cavern, at an elevation of nearly a hundred feet on the mountain, whence they gradually precipitate themselves from height to height in cascades, sometimes shewing, and sometimes concealing, in their foam the huge masses of rock which they hurry along. The roar of the torrents never ceases during the long rains, while it seems as if the rocks themselves were dissolved away,

and the thunder re-echoed from cavern to cavern. The awful solemnity of this spectacle is varied by the rays of the sun, which towards evening particularly refracts and reflects its various tints on the cascades. After the dog-days the rocks become arid and black, the basin resumes its level, and the valley returns to a profound stillness.

XII. SOLITUDE, which leads impassioned minds to dream over all the excesses of sorrow and joy, only increased the disturbed thoughts of Petrarch. The picturesque beauty of the scenery and the tranquillity of a heremitic life charmed his eyes, and elevated his mind towards heaven,

> Qui non palazzi, non teatro, o loggia,
> Ma in lor vece un abete, un faggio, un pino,
> Fra l'erba verde, e il bel monte vicino;
> Levan da terra al ciel nostro intelletto—

But he adds,

> E il rosignuol che dolcemente all' ombra
> Tutte le notti si lamenta e piange
> D'amorosi pensieri il cor m' ingombra.

The birds, the flowers, the fountains, and every object that he thought destined by nature to be happy, "conversed with him of love."

L'acque parlan d'amore, e l'aura, e i rami,
E gli augeletti, e i pesci, e i fiori, e l'erba;
Tutti insieme pregando ch'io sempr'ami.

Whenever he endeavoured to fix his thoughts to the contemplation of the real condition of his life, his sorrow became only more intense:

Io vo pensando, e nel pensier m'assale
Una pietà sì forte di me stesso.

"My imagination leads me from dream to dream—from mountain to mountain. I hate every spot that is inhabited by man; it is only by engraving on the rocks, and in exhausting myself by fatigue,—it is only in the obscurity of the forest that I can find a moment of repose. At every step my thoughts fluctuate between hope and despair, and I should become a prey to uncertainty if ever I became happy—but how, and when?"

Di pensier in pensier; di monte in monte
Mi guida Amor—
Per alti monti e per selve aspre trovo
Qualche riposo; ogni abitato loco
È nemico mortal degli occhi miei;
Ad ogni passo nasce un pensier nuovo
Della mia donna; che sovente in gioco
Gira il tormento—
Or potrebb'esser vero? or come? or quando?

" I shall not be believed, yet what I relate has frequently happened. Often in retired spots, when I fancied myself alone, I have seen her appear from the trunk of a tree, from the mouth of a cavern, from a cloud, from I know not where—fear fixed me to the spot—I knew not what became of me, nor where to go*." At other times the same illusion would delight him even to ecstasy; and he would fancy himself amidst the eternal joys of paradise, when in his imagination his eyes met the eyes of Laura, and he saw them brighten with a smile of love—a situation which he has described in three lines which no translation can render, and to which no criticism can do justice:

Pace tranquilla, senza alcuno affanno,
Simile a quella ch' è nel cielo eterna,
Move dal loro innamorato riso.

In one of those moments of beatific entrancement, he sees Laura rise from the clear waters of the Sorga, repose on its banks, or walk on its waves. " I see her every where and always lovely, so that, if I could perpetuate this sweet delusion, I should seek no other happiness on earth."

* Carminum Lib. 7. Ep. 7.

Or in forma di Ninfa or d'altra Diva
Che dal più chiaro fondo di Sorga esca
E pongasi a sedere in su la riva;
Or l'ho veduta su per l'erba fresca
Calcare i fior come una donna viva—
In tante parti e sì bella la veggio
Che se l'error durasse altro non chieggio—

But the night dissipated these visions :

When night has closed around,
Yet has the wanderer found
A short but deep forgetfulness at last
Of every woe, and every labour past.
But ah! my grief, that with each moment grows,
As fast and yet more fast
Day urges on, is heaviest at its close*.

As soon as his imagination was surrounded by silence and darkness, the very object which it had delighted to decorate and adorn during the day, was clothed with terror, and he frequently saw Laura during the night, and his limbs were chilled with fear. "I arose, trembling, with the earliest dawn to quit a house where every thing inspired me with terror. I climbed the heights, I trod the woods, looking

* MERIVALE's translation of a Canzone of Petrarch, the whole of which is a description of his habitual melancholy after sunset.—Part 1. Can. 5.—See Lady DACRE's translation in the APPENDIX.

on every side to see if the image which had disturbed my repose followed my steps: I could feel myself no where in safety*."—This is a passage from one of his Latin works; and when he expresses the same in Italian, a single line is sufficient to touch the feelings of every reader, who has experienced violent passions in solitude,

Tal paura ho di ritrovarmi solo!

XIII. The need of consolation forced him to seek refuge even among those persons whom he despised,

Il vulgo a me nemico, ed odioso,
Chi 'l crederia? per mio refugio chero!

and love carried him away to Avignon only that he might go back again suddenly to Vaucluse. He left France and returned after a few months. He undertook distant journeys, and endeavoured to forget Laura by long absence; and during these fits of indignation and shame, he thought that a less platonic attachment might put an end to the servitude in which his mind was held. "It was no more

* Carminum Lib. 2. Epist. 7.

to be hoped that I could be delivered by mere chance*." He had then a natural son, and, after some years, a daughter; but he protested, that in spite of these irregularities, he never loved any one but Laura. "I always felt," says he, "the unworthiness of my inclinations, and at my fortieth year, retain them no more than if I had never seen any other woman; sane and robust, in the warmth and vigour of life, I have subdued so shameful a necessity†." Even towards this period, which was nearly that of the death of Laura, neither the example of her virtue, nor his strong doubts of her being a heartless prude, were sufficient to heal his wound; and he opened his bleeding breast to his most intimate friends: "The day may perhaps come, when I shall have calmness enough to contemplate all the misery of my soul, to examine my passion, not however that I may continue to love her, but that I may love thee alone, O my God! But at this day, how many dangers have I yet to surmount, how many efforts have I yet to make; I no longer love as I did love, but still I love; I love in

* Durum opus eventu dominam pepulisse decenni.
Carm. Lib. 1. Ep. 12.

† Epist. ad Post.

spite of myself, but I love in lamentations and in tears: I will hate her, no, I must *still love* her*." Seven years after the date of this letter the conflict had not yet ceased. "My love," he says, "is vehement, extreme, but exclusive and virtuous.—No, this disquietude, these suspicions, these transports, this watchfulness, this delirium, this weariness of every thing, are not the signs of a virtuous *love* †.".

XIV. PETRARCH was in Italy when the plague, which in 1348 laid Europe waste, snatched away some of his dearest friends, and appalled him with the presage of a still greater calamity. "Formerly," says he, "when I quitted Laura, I saw her often in my dreams. It was a heavenly vision which consoled me, but now it affrights me. I think I hear her say—dost thou remember the evening when, forced to quit thee, I left thee bathed in tears? I then foresaw—but I could not—would not tell thee. I tell thee now, and thou mayest believe me—*thou wilt see me no more on this earth*:"

Non sperar di vedermi in terra mai.

---

* Famil. Lib. 4. Ep. 1.

† Liber de Secreto Conflictu Curarum suarum. An. 1343.

Two months afterwards Laura died in her fortieth year, and Petrarch wrote in a copy of Virgil this memorandum: "It was in the early days of my youth, on the 6th of April, in the morning, and in the year 1327, that Laura, distinguished by her own virtues, and celebrated in my verses, first blessed my eyes in the church of Santa Clara, at Avignon; and it was in the same city, on the 6th of the very same month of April, at the very same hour in the morning, in the year 1348, that this bright luminary was withdrawn from our sight, when I was at Verona, alas! ignorant of my calamity. The remains of her chaste and beautiful body were deposited in the church of the Cordeliers, on the evening of the same day. To preserve the afflicting remembrance, I have taker a bitter pleasure in recording it particularly in this book which is most frequently before my eyes, in order that nothing in this world may have any farther attraction for me; that this great attachment to life being dissolved, I may, by frequent reflection, and a proper estimation of our transitory existence, be admonished that it is high time for me to think of quitting this earthly Babylon, which I trust it will not be difficult for me, with a strong and manly courage, to accomplish."

XV. LAURA, independently of the influence of love, had over Petrarch that ascendancy which every person who acts invariably with calmness, must acquire over impassioned characters. Her religious sentiments were marked by more serenity and confidence than those of her lover. In all her actions her self-possession appears rather natural than forced. Her conversation is full of that sweetness, that discretion, and that good sense, which form a triumphant contrast with the enthusiasm of the Poet. She always seems to think that modesty and her own esteem are the most beautiful ornaments of a woman. Petrarch speaks often of her noble birth; and from the costliness and elegance of her dress, it appears that she possessed a fortune equal to her rank. But she did not wish to live too much noticed in the world:

In nobil sangue vita umile e queta.

Proud as she was of the affection she had deserved, and of the celebrity which it had given her,

Quel dolce nodo
Mi piacque assai, ch' intorno al core avei,
E piacemi il bel nome,

she was more devoted to the cares of her family than to literature and poetry,

E non curò giammai rime nè versi.

Her domestic situation, however, was not a happy one; for her husband, whom she made her heir, leaving to his care three sons and six daughters, married again in seven months, while he was still in mourning for her*. Although Petrarch occasionally fancied it so strongly, as to make the readers of his poetry believe, that she really loved him, he is by far more explicit when he tells that it has ever been the only one impenetrable secret of the breast of Laura; and indeed she buried it with herself. The soft and pensive character of her countenance, expressed a mind capable of suffering without complaining:

In aspetto pensoso anima lieta.

We are sensible of exaggeration when Petrarch describes Laura as "sent upon the earth to assure mankind of the existence of the angels in heaven,"

A far del Ciel fede fra noi;

* De Sade, Pièces justificat. V. 2.

still if, as he often believed, a real passion preyed upon her heart, and she was making a daily sacrifice of herself and her lover to her duties, the persevering silence of Laura, and the alternate appearances of severity and fondness towards Petrarch, ought to be ascribed less to artifice than to her constant efforts to conceal feelings which she might apprehend dangerous to disclose, and which, at the same time, it was not in her power to conquer.—"Hence I console myself, and prefer sufferings for such a woman to the possession of any other:"

> Pur mi consola, che morir per lei
> Meglio è che gioir d'altra.

XVI. *But this is the supposition of a lover*; for passion and reason, though they at first meet in our mind as two friends, seldom reign together with equality of power; and, in a short time, the one must inevitably yield to the dictatorship of the other. That love should not have been, during twenty years, subdued by resolute virtue, nor virtue overpowered by love, is a phenomenon that can be conceived only as among the ideal possibilities of things. It seems, however, very consistent with the frequent contradictions of human nature to

suppose, that Laura, without loving the man, cherished the passion she had inspired. There is a keen gratification in the consciousness of possessing charms that are fatal to their admirers; it tempts even the best-natured persons, because it is softened with a kind feeling of pity for the sufferers. Like Eve looking into the lake of Paradise,

> I started back;
> It started back: but pleased I soon returned;
> Pleased it return'd as soon with answering looks
> Of sympathy and love,

her daughters frequently delight to search in the heart of their lover for the reflection of their own image only. Enthusiasm for a distinguished man; need of sentimental diversions from the monotony of a lonely life; imperious necessity of being loved, which perhaps is the only pleasure constantly sought by men and women, and which is indispensable to the sex that stands naturally in need of the support of the stronger; and lastly, the habitual sense of religion and modesty, strengthened by the fear of public opinion, and exalted by an earnest wish of perfecting the moral habits of their lover, and of changing their passion to a lasting friendship—all these sensations, and perhaps many more, acting at the same time,

tempting and flattering each other, are so blended as to keep women in a condition of mind which they frequently mistake for a pure and serious attachment. Thus Laura's love

"Was but a lambent flame which play'd about her breast."

For, shewing constantly a generous kindness to Petrarch, she never exposed her virtue, while by the best calculated diplomacy of coquetry, without once committing her secret, she was ever successful in keeping alive and disappointing the hope of her lover; and she justified herself with the belief, that, by the example of her chastity, she guided him on the way to heaven. Indeed, by checking his warm inclination to sensual indulgences, and by exalting his religious principles, her conduct proved beneficial to him*. But he was also disposed to a morbid sensibility; a disease peculiar to men of genius, and which, whenever it is embittered by protracted misfortunes or lingering passions, never fails to degenerate into a hopeless consumption of mind.

* Senil. lib. 8. epist. 1—Lib. 9. epist. 2—Lib. 11. epist. 3. —Famil. Epist. 98.

XVII. He endured for twenty-one years the misery of adoring at once and suspecting the human being that he believed to be the only one that was essential to his happiness—a perplexity which wears to death, and humbles before his own eyes every man who

Is of a constant, loving, noble nature.—OTHELLO.

For these are the very characters that nature has doomed to raging passion; whilst very few, even amongst them, have received in compensation the fortitude of being so inexorable against their own deepest affections, as at any rate to cut out by the root that ulcer which men in general only feed and foster by the temporizing remedies they apply. It seems that Petrarch was pleased with exerting his courage, in sustaining a long war with his own hopes and fears; and that he never enjoyed the pleasure of a mind which, smiling at the allurement of hope, and scorning the commiseration of men, measures all the extent of its sorrow, and bears it unshaken by the fluctuation of doubts and illusions. Petrarch, on the contrary, felt always a kind of necessity of attracting by all means the sympathy of the world; and the wretchedness that is encouraged by such a vanity is utterly incapable of self-

consolation. A refined mind, agitated by a natural quickness of sensations habitually uncontrolled, made him dread, and wish by turns the possession of Laura. His passion was protracted by that unmanly irresolution which was the real source of his misery and lamentations, and afforded to Laura the best means of preserving both her lover and her virtue. While he was aware "of the madness and humiliation of loving without being loved*"—he still entertained the conviction, "that there does not exist a breast so heartless that might not be moved by constant entreaties and tears—"

> Non è sì duro cor che lagrimando,
> Pregando, amando talor non si smova.

With these lines ends the poetry which he wrote during the life of Laura. Her beauty had long since yielded more to infirmity than to age. She was scarcely thirty-five when Petrarch wrote in one of his most serious works, "If I had loved her person only, I had changed long since†." His friends won-

* *Ah demens! ita ne flammas animi in* SEXTUM ET DECIMUM ANNUM *aluisti?*—De Secreto Conflictu.

† *Si post corpus abiissem, jampridem mutandi propositi tempus erat.*—L. C.

dered how a beauty so withered should continue to inspire so ardent an attachment. "What does it signify," answered Petrarch, "that the bow can no longer wound, since its mortal blow has been already inflicted?"

> Piaga per allentar d' arco non sana.
>
> What deep wounds ever closed without a scar?
> The heart's bleed longest, and but heal to wear
> That which disfigures it. CHILDE HAROLD.

When she disappeared for ever from his eyes, melancholy sensations had long become habitual to him.

> And roused to livelier pangs his wakeful sense of woe.

In the course of the ten following years he wrote the second part of his love-poetry, where he describes Laura as sometimes appearing to him in the middle of the night; at other times "he dissolves into ecstasies," and brings "the third heaven before his eyes," to contemplate the celestial beauties of Laura. Frequently he complains of the fatality which condemned him still to nourish his desires upon the dust of a shadow—

> ———— Tale è terra, e posto ha in doglia
> Lo mio cor; che vivendo in pianto il tenne—
> Il desir vive, e la speranza è morta.

Again—"What art thou doing? why art thou still musing, O my disconsolate soul? Why dost thou persevere in looking back to the time that cannot return? Thou only addest fuel to the fire in which thou consumest. Let us seek heaven, since nothing pleases us on earth from the day that we saw that beauty which, living and dead, was destined to disturb our repose—"

Che fai? che pensi? che pur dietro guardi
Nel tempo che tornar non puote omai,
Anima sconsolata? che pur vai
Giungendo legne al foco ove tu ardi!
Cerchiamo 'l Ciel, se qui nulla ne piace!
Che mal per noi quella beltà si vide,
Se viva e morta ne dovea tor pace.

And the doubt if he had ever been loved, or had been always deluded by Laura, still continued to corrode his heart. More than twenty years at least after he had lost her, when he was himself on the brink of the grave, and when he was able to think of her with more composure, he drew from his memory a picture more distinct, though not perhaps perfectly true, of the heart, the principles, and the conduct of the woman, who had made all the happiness and all the misery of his life.

XVIII. He describes Laura descending from heaven on the dew, the night after she had left for ever the miseries of the world. She appeared before her lover, stretched forth her hand, and sighing, said to him: "Recognize the woman who, from the first moment that thy young heart knew her, withdrew thee from the path of the crowd. Whilst my tears testified the sorrow which her loss had occasioned me—Thou wilt never be happy, said she, while thou art the slave of the world. To a pure mind, death is emancipation from a dreary prison. My loss would give thee pleasure if thou knewest but a small portion of my happiness.—In uttering these words, she turned her eyes with religious gratitude towards heaven."

"She ceased; and I said to her: Do not the weight of infirmities and the tortures invented by tyrants, sometimes embitter the agonies of death? I cannot deny, said she, that death is preceded by acute suffering and by the dread of eternity; but if we place our trust in God, it is but as a sigh. In the flower of my youth, when thou lovedst me the most, life had its greatest charm for me; but when I quitted it, I felt the gaiety of one who leaves the place of his exile to return to his home. I felt no sorrow except pity for thee."

"Ah! but tell me, said I, in the name of that fidelity which you formerly knew, and which you now know more certainly in the presence of that Being from whom nothing is hidden, tell me was the pity which you felt for me inspired by love?"

"I had hardly uttered these words, when I perceived her countenance illumined by that heavenly smile which had ever shed serenity over my sorrows, and she sighed. Thou hast always possessed my affection, said she, and thou always wilt possess it—

Mai diviso
Da te non fu il mio cor, nè giammai fia:

but I have deemed it right to temper thy passion, by the sternness of my looks. A mother never loves her child more dearly than when she seems to chide it. How often have I said to myself, he is consumed by a raging fire, and I must not therefore let him know what is passing in my heart. Alas! we are little capable of such efforts when we ourselves love and yet fear. But it was by these means only, that we could preserve our honour and save our souls. How often have I feigned anger while love was struggling in my heart. When I saw thee sinking beneath despondency, I

gave thee a look of consolation, I spoke to thee. The grief and the dread which I felt must have altered the tone of my voice, and thou must have perceived it. At other times thou wert carried away by rage, and I could controul thee by severity only. These are the expedients, these are the arts I have practised. It was by this alternation of kindness and of rigour that I have conducted thee sometimes happy, sometimes unhappy, wearied in truth, but still I have conducted thee till there is no more any danger: I have saved us both, and my happiness is the greater that I have."

"My tears flowed fast while she spoke, and I answered her, trembling, that I should be rewarded if I might dare to believe her—she interrupted me, and her face reddened as she said: O thou of little faith, wherefore dost thou doubt? My tongue shall NEVER REVEAL whether thou hast been as dear to my eyes as to my heart—

> Se al mondo tu piacesti agli occhi miei,
> QUESTO MI TACCIO.

But in nothing have I delighted more than in thy love, and in the immortality which thou hast given to my name. All that I required of thee was to moderate thy excess. In endea-

vouring to tell me the secret of thy soul, thou openedst it to all the world. Thence arose my coldness. The more thou calledst aloud for pity, the more was I constrained by modesty and fear to be silent. There has been little difference in our sympathy, except that the one proclaimed, and the other concealed it. But complaint does not embitter sufferings, nor does silence soften them"—

> Non è minore il duol, perch' altri il prema;
> Nè maggior per andarsi lamentando:
> Per finzion non cresce il ver, nè scema.

They continue this conversation, and Petrarch dwells with some complacency on the merit of his poetry, whilst Laura is unable to conceal that jealousy, which, although it springs immediately out of selfishness and envy, is always mistaken for the inseparable effect of the deepest attachment—"I would have desired, she said, to have been born near thy beautiful country; however, that land in which I have been fortunate enough to please thee, ought to seem fair in my eyes. Haply that heart, whose devotion TO ME ALONE is my unfailing delight, would have felt for others."—

> Che potea il cor, del qual SOLA IO mi fido,
> Volgersi altrove————

Questo no, rispos'io, perchè la rota
Terza del ciel m'alzava a tanto amore,
Ovunque fosse, stabile ed immota.
Or che si sia, diss'ella, io n'ebbi onore
Che ancor mi segue. Ma per tuo diletto
Tu non t'accorgi del fuggir dell'ore.

" O no!" I cried, " the rolling spheres above
That kindled first the nascent spark to love,
Whatever clime your heavenly presence own'd,
Had led me there by sacred instinct bound."
" Whate'er you think, the honour all was mine,"
The vision answer'd with a smile divine;
" But heedless how the blissful moments fly,
You see not how Aurora climbs the sky!" BOYD'S *Transl.*

Her lover then asked her, if it would be long before he should rejoin her. Laura departed, saying: "As far as it is permitted me to know, thou wilt remain long upon earth without me"—

Ella già mossa, disse: Al creder mio,
Tu starai in terra senza me gran tempo.

Petrarch survived Laura twenty-six years.

AN ESSAY

ON THE POETRY

OF

PETRARCH.

AN ESSAY

ON THE POETRY

OF

PETRARCH.

———— NON HO SE NON QUEST' UNA
VIA DA CELARE IL MIO ANGOSCIOSO PIANTO.
Part. I. Son. 81.

I. THE vision of the spirit of Laura was written, as appears by the expressions at the close of it, when Petrarch was far advanced in years. He revised it four months before his death, and inserted it as an episode in a moral poem which he called the TRIONFI—a series of allegorical visions on the powers of Love, Chastity, Death, Talents, Fame, Time, and Eternity. Several Provençal poems written before his time, and the *Dream*, the *Flower and the Leaf*, and the *House of Fame*, of his contemporary Chaucer, are of the same description*.

* POPE's remark on the House of Fame.

Perhaps the models of them may be traced in the visions which the monks preached in imitation of those of Ezekiel and St. John's Revelation. The last canto of the Trionfi is called *Della Divinità*, and begins, "Since, then, I behold nothing certain beneath the heavens, I look fearfully around me, and ask myself, in what then canst thou trust? I answered, IN GOD."—It concludes with Laura: "If he who beheld her on earth was blessed, what shall he not be on beholding her again in heaven!"

> Se fu beato chi la vide in terra,
> Or che fia dunque a rivederla in Cielo!

He considered this work as a great undertaking; and he gave it up from the fear that he would be unable to finish it*. He betook to it again, however: he perceived that he had failed; but he persevered nevertheless, and left it so disfigured with various readings, that to complete a copy after his death, it was necessary to supply much by conjecture. It is only when he is speaking of Laura in this poem, that his heart communicates its fire to his genius, which had languished more under the disgust of life than the burthen of years. He

* *Magnum opus inceperam in eo genere, sed ætatem respiciens, substiti.*—Ad Joh. Bocac. Sen. Lib. v. Ep. 2.

records his melancholy feelings on the margins of his manuscript: "The more I reflect on what I am, the more I feel ashamed of this work: It is no longer myself, it is another who writes*."—He was born to create with anxiety, and to dissipate in despair, the illusions which were necessary to his repose, and he was thus often tempted to destroy even the lyric poetry which he had addressed to Laura†. He does not even mention it in his LETTER TO POSTERITY, though, if it had not been for this very poetry, the other literary merits of this great man would not have been remembered with so much gratitude. To his intimate friends, he expresses himself ashamed of having devoted his talents to the amusement of ballad-singers, and lovers,—lamenting that his verses had been too generally dispersed to be recalled; and complaining that they had sometimes been partially disfigured, and sometimes entirely forged by professional singers, who took great merit to themselves for collecting them‡. He

* *Dum quid sum cogito, pudet hæc scribere—scribo enim non tanquam ego, sed quasi alius.*—This memorandum was copied by the Archbishop Beccadelli from the autograph copy then in possession of Cardinal Bembo.

† Famil. Lib. 8. Ep. 1.—Senil. Lib. 5. Ep. 3.

‡ Senil. Lib. 13. Epist. 4.

offers the same apology to the world, in the first sonnet of his collection*, which he resolved to prepare in his old age, rejecting those pieces which were apocryphal, and those which he considered unworthy of him†.

II. The pleasure of living his youth over again, of meeting Laura in every line, of examining the history of his own heart; and perhaps the consciousness which, after all, rarely misleads authors respecting the best of their works, induced the poet in his old age to give to his love-verses a perfection, which has never been attained by any other Italian writer, and which he thinks "he could not himself have carried farther‡". If the manuscripts did not still exist, it would be impossible to imagine

* Quand' era in parte altr' uom da quel che or sono—
Ma ben vegg'io siccome al popol tutto
Favola fui gran tempo—
Or del mio vaneggiar vergogna è il frutto
E il pentirsi.

† They are to be found in almost all the editions, at the end of the volume, under the titles of *Giunta*, or *Rime rifiutate*.

‡ *Pietro Paolo Vergerio intese da Colucio Salutato amico del Petrarca che aveva detto, "come le sue composizioni tutte poteva migliorare assai, fuorchè le Rime; nelle quali s' era tanto alzato, che più non gli dava l' animo d' arrivarle."*—Beccadelli, Vit. del Petrar.

or believe the unwearied pains he has bestowed on the correction of his verses. They are curious monuments, although they afford little aid in exploring by what secret workings the long and laborious meditation of Petrarch has spread over his poetry all the natural charms of sudden and irresistible inspiration.

The following is a literal translation of a succession of memorandums in Latin, at the head of one of his sonnets—"I began this by the impulse of the Lord *(Domino jubente)*, 10th September, at the dawn of day, after my morning prayers."

"I must make these two verses over again, singing them *(cantando)*, and I must transpose them; 3 o'clock, A.M. 19th October."

"*I like this (hoc placet)*, 30th October, 10 o'clock in the morning."

"No; this does not please me. 20th December in the evening—"

And in the midst of his corrections he writes, on laying down his pen, "I shall return to this again; I am called to supper."

"February 18th, towards noon; this is now well; however, look at it again *(vide tamen adhuc)*."

Sometimes he notes the town where he happens to be—"1364, *Veneris mane*, 19 *Jan. dum*

invitus Patavii ferior."—It might seem rather a curious than useful remark, that it was generally on Friday that he occupied himself with the painful labour of correction, did we not also know that it was to him a day of fast and penitence.

When any thought occurred to him, he noted it in the midst of his verses thus, "Consider this—I had some thoughts of transposing these lines, and of making the first verse the last, but I have not done so for the sake of harmony—the first would then be more sonorous, and the last less so, which is against rule; for the end should be more harmonious than the beginning." Sometimes he says, "The commencement is good, but it is not pathetic enough." In some places he suggests to himself to repeat the same words rather than the same ideas. In others he judges it better not to multiply the ideas, but to amplify them with other expressions. Every verse is turned in several different ways; above each phrase and each word he frequently places equivalent expressions, in order to examine them again; and it requires a profound knowledge of Italian to perceive, that after such perplexing scruples, he always adopts those words which combine at once most harmony, elegance, and energy.

III. These laborious corrections gave rise to an opinion, even in the life-time of Petrarch, that his verses were the work less of a lover than of a poet*. It is indubitably true that, that passion cannot be very strong, which we are at leisure to describe.—But a man of genius feels more intensely and suffers more strongly than another; and for this very reason, when the force of his passion has subsided, he retains for a longer period the recollection of what it has been, and can more easily imagine himself again under its influence; and, in my conception, what we call the power of imagination is chiefly the combination of strong feelings and recollections. Thus a man of genius is peculiarly gifted with the faculty of observing the secret workings of human nature, as she prevails in his own heart, and in the hearts of all mankind; and is enabled to describe those feelings, and bring them home to every reader. The great secret of the poet's art is, to make us feel our existence by, the force of sympathy; but at the moment that he groans under his own sufferings, it is impossible for him to examine the workings of his heart, or those of others—and the lyrical poetry of Petrarch, which may be read in the

* Epist. Famil. Lib. 2. Ep. 7.

course of a few days, was written during a period of thirty-two years. Many of the pieces, no doubt, were conceived at moments when he was under the immediate influence of his passion; but were written many days, perhaps many months, and certainly perfected many years, afterwards. The 48th sonnet of the first part of his collection was written eleven years after his acquaintance with Laura:

> Or volge Signor mio, l'*undecim'* anno
> Ch' io fui sommesso al dispietato giogo—

Four years after this last epoch he wrote the 85th sonnet:

> Fuggir vorrei; ma gli amorosi rai
> Che dì e notte nella mente stanno
> Risplendon sì che al *quintodecim'* anno
> M'abbaglian più che il primo giorno assai—

During the course of this year, and the whole of the next, he composed only eleven sonnets; for the 96th began

> Rimansi addietro il *sestodecim'* anno—

and the 97th

> *Dicesett'* anni ha già rivolto il Cielo.

Thus in these *twelve* months he wrote only

fourteen verses to Laura. Indeed if his mind had experienced no intervals of calm, he would never have been able to execute those conceptions, and still less to correct them. He would not have lived so long; or, if he had lived, it would have been in that state of disquietude and inaction, inseparable from agitated feelings. The harmony, elegance, and perfection of his poetry are the result of long labour; but its original conceptions and pathos always sprang from the sudden inspiration of a deep and powerful passion. By an attentive perusal of all the writings of Petrarch, it may be reduced almost to a certainty—that by dwelling perpetually on the same ideas, and by allowing his mind to prey incessantly on itself, the whole train of his feelings and reflections acquired one strong character and tone; and if he was ever able to suppress them for a time, they returned to him with increased violence—that, to tranquillize this agitated state of his mind, he, in the first instance, communicated in a free and loose manner all that he thought and felt, in his correspondence with his intimate friends—that he afterwards reduced these narratives, with more order and description, into Latin verse—and that he, lastly, perfected them with a greater profusion

of imagery and more art, in his Italian poetry, the composition of which at first served only, as he frequently says, "to divert and mitigate all his afflictions."

IV. We may thus understand the perfect concord which prevails in Petrarch's poetry between nature and art; between the accuracy of fact and the magic of invention; between depth and perspicuity; between devouring passion and calm meditation. In three or four verses of Italian he often condenses the description, and concentrates the fire, which fill a page of his elegies and letters in Latin. It is precisely because the poetry of Petrarch originally sprang from his heart, that his passion never seems fictitious or cold, notwithstanding the profuse ornament of his style, or the metaphysical elevation of his thoughts. In the movement of Laura's eyes he sees a light which points out the way to heaven—

> Gentil mia donna, io veggio
> Nel mover de' vostri occhi un dolce lume
> Che mi mostra la via che al Ciel conduce.

He exclaims "that the atmosphere becomes smiling, luminous, and serene, at her approach"—

Il Ciel di vaghe e lucide faville
S'accende intorno; e in vista si rallegra
D'esser fatto seren da sì begli occhi—.

"that the air which is breathed around her, is so purified by the celestial radiance of her countenance, that while he fixes his eyes upon her, every sensual desire is extinguished"—

L'aer percosso da' suoi dolci rai
S'infiamma d'onestate—
Basso desir non è ch' ivi si senta;
Ma d'onor, di virtute. Or quando mai
Fu per somma beltà vil voglia spenta?

Still he is always natural. Few lovers, indeed, could have conceived these ideas; yet the fire and the facility with which they are expressed, render them instantly familiar to the imagination of almost every reader. In the art of forming new and evident images, either of the most simple or abstract ideas, through the means of metaphor, Petrarch is as happy as he is original. To express the common-place thought, that his poetry and the beauty of Laura would be remembered after their death —"I see in fancy," says he, "a silent tongue, and two fair eyes, though closed, still beaming with light, surviving us—"

Ch' io veggio nel pensier, dolce mio foco,
Fredda una lingua e duo begli occhi spenti
Rimaner dopo noi, pien' di faville—

and he has been imitated in this passage by an English poet, who combines in a great degree severity of taste, with boldness of expression:

" Ev'n in our ashes live their wonted fires."—GRAY.

V. IF Petrarch had not too unsparingly made use of antitheses—if he had not too frequently repeated his hyperboles—if he had not too often compared Laura to the sun—his numerous plagiarists, who, however, have never been able to imitate his beauties, would not have been so much noticed for their faults; nor would Salvator Rosa have had occasion to complain in his satires that "*These metaphors had exhausted the sun.*"— His play upon the words *Lauro* and *L'aura*, signifying *the laurel*, and *the air;* and the conceits afforded by the transformation of Apollo's Daphne into the immortal laurel, are still admired by some foreigners*, on the authority of one of the most celebrated critics of Italy†, who nevertheless was delighted with the *Italia Liberata* of Trissino, and would never allow that Tasso's Jerusalem was the work of a poet. For my own part, I feel some pity towards a

* Madame de GENLIS's Novel, *Pétrarque et Laure.*

† GRAVINA, *Ragione Poetica.* Lib. 2. Sect. 27 et 28.

great poet, who with such extreme delicacy and ardour of mind—with a judgment so difficult, and a taste so refined—with a heated imagination, and an impassioned heart, could condescend, for the amusement of Laura and his readers, to such cold affectations. Still even Petrarch was bound to discharge the unfortunate duty of almost all writers, by sacrificing his own taste to that of his contemporaries. He ingrafted on his verses the *agudezzas, ternuras, y conceptos* of the Spanish poets, and was deservedly accused of plagiarism.—"We formerly possessed," says an historian of Valencia, "a famous poet named Mossen Jordi; and Petrarch, who was born a hundred years after, robbed him of his verses, and has sold them in Italian to the world as his own, of which I could convict him in many passages; however I shall content myself with quoting a few lines*:"

MOSSEN JORDI.

E non he pau, e no tin quim guerreig—
Vol sobre l' ciel, et nom' movi de terra—
E no estrench res, e tot lo mon abras—
Oy he de mi, e vull a altri gran bè—
Si no es amor, donchs azo' que sera?—

* GASPARO SCIOLANO, *Istor. Valenz.*

PETRARCA.

Pace non trovo, e non ho da far guerra—
E volo sopra il cielo, e giaccio in terra—
E nulla stringo, e tutto il mondo abbraccio—
Ed ho in odio me stesso ed amo altrui—
S' amor non è, che dunque è quel ch' io sento?—

Whether or not Petrarch has availed himself of other Spanish works, it is impossible for me to decide. He has inserted here and there various ideas evidently borrowed from the Provençals; and, although he has often improved them, they displease precisely because they do not harmonize with the solemn, profound, and impassioned tenor of his own style. The following sonnet, in which Petrarch, if he did not borrow the thoughts, imitated the amorous lamentations, of the French Troubadours, may give a not imperfect idea of their love-poetry. It is a mosaic of antithesis: their songs and their passions being chilled by epigrammatic refinement, they discover that they were neither inspired poets nor warm lovers—

S' una fede amorosa, un cor non finto,
Un languir dolce, un desïar cortese;
S' oneste voglie in gentil foco accese;
S' un lungo error in cieco laberinto;

Se nella fronte ogni pensier dipinto,
Od in voci interrotte appena intese,
Or da paura, or da vergogna offese;
S'un pallor di viola, e d'amor tinto;
S'aver altrui più caro che se stesso;
Se lagrimar, e sospirar mai sempre;
Pascendosi di duol, d'ira, e d'affanno;
S'arder da lunge, ed agghiacciar da presso
Son le cagion ch'amando i' mi distempre:
Vostro, donna, è 'l peccato, e mio fia 'l danno.

If faith most true, a heart that cannot feign,
If love's sweet languishment and chasten'd thought,
And wishes pure by nobler feelings taught,
If in a labyrinth wanderings long and vain,
If on the brow each pang pourtray'd to bear,
Or from the heart low broken sounds to draw,
Withheld by shame, or check'd by pious awe,
If on the faded cheek love's hue to wear,
If than myself to hold one far more dear,
If sighs that cease not, tears that ever flow,
Wrung from the heart by all love's various woe,
In absence if consumed, and chill'd when near,
If these be ills in which I waste my prime,
Though I the sufferer be, yours, lady, is the crime.

LADY DACRE.

VI. ON this imitation of the Troubadours, Petrarch has engrafted a line borrowed from the Classics—

"Et tinctus viola pallor amantium."—HORACE.

Yet with what delicacy and truth has he improved it, by the happy expression—*Pallore tinto di viola e d'amore.* Mary Stuart, fated from her earliest youth to love and sorrow, has translated the same line of Horace in her monody (preserved by Brantome) on the death of her young husband, Francis the Second—

Mon pâle visage de violet teint
Qui est l'amoureux teint.

Although the Latin poets were his professed masters, yet, fortunately, Petrarch fancied that they could not be worthily imitated in the Italian language, and he has therefore sparingly borrowed from them. I can recognize only one or two lines of Virgil, of Ovid, or of Horace; of which, tempted rather by unavoidable remembrance than designed imitation, he occasionally availed himself—

"Agnovit longe gemitum præsaga mali mens."—VIRGIL.
Mente mia che presaga dè' tuoi danni.

"Elige cui dicas, tu mihi sola places."—OVID.
A cui io dissi: Tu sola a me piaci.

Horace, by the transposition of a few words, has converted the real passion of Sappho into mere gaiety and gallantry—

"Dulce ridentem Lalagen amabo,
"Dulce loquentem."—

Petrarch, although he scarcely read Greek, and the fragments of Sappho were not yet known, restored the glow and the warmth which Horace had effaced, and, by adding the *sigh* to the *smile* and the *voice* of his mistress, shewed that even the Greek poetess had left the picture unfinished—

> Per divina bellezza indarno mira
> Chi gli occhi di costei giammai non vide—
> Che non sa come dolce ella *sospira*
> E come dolce *parla* e dolce *ride*.

Neither could the sensual love of the Romans and of the Greeks be reconciled with the delicacy of Petrarch's poetry. His finest imitations are drawn from the sacred writings, which I do not believe has yet been remarked by any critic, although it must be obvious to every one how deeply all his thoughts were imbued with religion—

> E femmisi all' incontra
> A mezza via, come nemico armato.—P. 2. Son. 47.

"So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man."—Prov. c. xxiv. v. 34.

> E la cetera mia rivolta è in pianto.—P. 1. Son. 24.

"My harp also is turned to mourning."—Job, c. xxx. v. 31.

Qual grazia, qual amore, o qual destino
Mi darà penne a guisa di colomba,
Ch'io mi riposi, e levimi da terra?—P. 1. Son. 60.

"O that I had wings like a dove! *for then* would I flee away, and be at rest."—Psalm lv. v. 5.

Vergine bella, che di Sol vestita,
Coronata di stelle.—P. 2. Canz. ult.

"A woman clothed with the sun—and upon her head a crown of twelve stars."—Revel. c. xii. v. 1. 2.

The elevated strain of piety and love which breathes through his works, borders occasionally on profaneness—

Baciale il piede, e la man bella e bianca;
Dille, e il baciar sia in vece di parole,
Lo spirto è pronto, ma la carne è stanca.

Her lovely feet and gentle hands salute;
Wafting a poor reply with semblance mute,
Mourning and humble—*signs that seem to speak*
"The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."
Matth. c. xxvi. v. 41.

To dissipate Laura's jealousy, he compares the eagerness with which he sought her resemblance in the face of beautiful women, to the devotion of a pilgrim gazing at the image of his Saviour—

Movesi 'l vecchierèl canuto, e bianco,
Dal dolce loco ov' ha sua età fornita,
E dalla famigliuola sbigottita
Che vede 'l caro Padre venir manco:

Indi, traendo poi l'antico fianco
Per l'estreme giornate di sua vita,
Quanto più può col buon voler s'aita,
Rotto dagli anni e dal cammino stanco:
E viene a Roma seguendo'l desio
Per mirar la sembianza di colui
Ch'ancor lassù nel Ciel vedere spera;
Così, lasso, talor vo cercand' io,
Donna, quant' è possibile, in altrui
La desiata vostra forma vera.

The palmer bent, with locks of silver gray,
Quits the sweet spot where he has pass'd his years,
Quits his poor family whose anxious fears
Paint the loved father fainting on his way;
And trembling, on his aged limbs slow borne,
In these last days that close his earthly course,
He, in his soul's strong purpose, finds new force,
Though weak with age, though by long travel worn:
Thus reaching Rome, led on by pious love,
He seeks the image of that Saviour Lord
Whom soon he hopes to meet in bliss above:
So, oft in other forms I seek to trace
Some charm, that to my heart may yet afford
A faint resemblance of thy matchless grace.

LADY DACRE.

Love, alluding to the creation of the first man in Genesis, directs the poet to write that "Since the eyes of Adam were unclosed, mankind had never contemplated such beauty as Laura bore with her to the grave:"

Forma par non fu mai dal dì che Adamo
Aperse gli occhi in prima ; e basti or questo :
Piangendo detto, e tu piangendo scrivi.

VII. THE grand and solemn forms under which Love is represented by the Italian poets, belong more to the mystic philosophy, than to the popular mythology of the ancients. Tasso, who in his lyrics yields only to Petrarch, and who possessed in a greater degree the power of generalization, has pourtrayed by a few bold strokes the image of the Platonic or rather Pythagorean Love—

Amore alma è del mondo ; Amore è mente
Che guida in Ciel per corso obbliquo il sole ;
E le leggi degli astri e le carole
Van di sua lira al suon veloci e lente.
L'aria, l'acqua, la terra, e il foco ardente
Misti alle membra dell'immensa mole
Nutre il suo spirto ; e s'uom s'allegra e duole
Opra è d'Amore o speri anco e pavente.
Ma benchè tutto crei tutto governi,
E per tutto risplenda e in tutto spiri,
Più spiega in noi di sua possanza Amore.*

In this description Love is the soul of the universe—by him all creation is impelled : he agitates the elements in order to mingle together and to combine them into new forms : he puts

* TOR. TASSO. Poesie Liriche.

all bodies into action, and suspends them in equilibrium by the power of attraction and repulsion: his wing stretches from one planet to another; by the sounds of his lyre he governs their motions, and renders the stars obedient to the laws of universal harmony. The inhabitants of the earth are governed by his laws: our life is but a rapid succession of hopes and fears—of pleasure and pain, because he draws us irresistibly towards those objects, by which we feel the pleasure and consciousness of our existence, and makes us shun those which either embitter life, or bring on us the indifference of death. The blind child, of whose wantonness Anacreon and Horace delight to complain, becomes in Petrarch "a Godhead in the full vigour of manhood, whose sight is deep and clear, and whose wounds are not inflicted by chance or by caprice"—

Quell' antico mio dolce empio Signore—
Cieco non già, ma faretrato il veggo;
Garzon con l'ali, non pinto, ma vivo—

severe and inexorable, he commands resignation, because "he executes those laws to which heaven and earth are alike subject"—

Dura legge d'Amor! ma benchè obbliqua,
Servar conviensi; però ch'ella aggiunge
Di cielo in terra, universale, antiqua.

At the same time that he excites the spiritual, he cannot avoid exciting the material, portion of our nature; and that we desire the body as much as the soul of the object of our affections, must be ascribed to the grossness of our senses, and not to the viciousness of our passion. He is thus not the tyrant of Petrarch, but his "master and preceptor"—"the director of his conduct and the depositary of his secrets"—nor does he disdain "to render an account of the exercise of this power."—"Thou knowest that I feed upon tears; but thou knowest also, that at this price thou hast been able to respect the purity of that beauty which thou adorest, to raise thy mind to that Being who created her, and to render thyself like unto her"—

Amor mi manda quel dolce pensiero,
Che secretario antico è fra noi due,
E mi conforta.

Io mi pasco di lagrime; e tu 'l sai.

Da mille atti inonesti io t'ho ritratto—
Di lei l'alto vestigio
T'impressi al core e fecil suo simile—
Da volar sopra il ciel t'avea dato ali.

These conversations often pass between Love and the Poet on the banks of the Sorga; and

they wander together through the valley of Vaucluse, after the death of Laura, consoling each other for her loss—

> Amor, che meco al buon tempo ti stavi
> In queste rive a' pensier nostri amiche,
> E per saldar le ragion nostre antiche,
> Meco, e col fiume ragionando andavi.
> ——————— Sì aspre vie nè sì selvagge
> Cercar non so, che Amor non venga sempre
> Ragionando con meco, ed io con lui.

VIII. Besides these different personifications of the passion, the modes of describing it are so various, that out of kindness to those persons, who must not understand Greek, and for whom this little volume is chiefly written, I shall add, towards the end, some extracts from the amorous poetry of the Greeks, from Sappho's age, down to the poets of the Lower Empire*. Petrarch's love-poetry may be considered as the intermediate link between that of the classics and the moderns. Sappho's description of her own passion is what every person of the same ardent mind would inevitably feel under the same circumstances; and what every observer can discern, and thinks,

* Appendix, No. II.

perhaps, that he could describe. The genius, however, of at once seizing, of harmoniously arranging, and of rapidly and powerfully painting all the exterior circumstances of a passion, so as to bring it home to the bosom of every reader, belongs but to a gifted few—for it requires a profound knowledge of all the workings of the human heart. It was only by the deep study of anatomy, that Michelangelo learned to give correctness and energy to the forms and attitudes of his figures. But if an artist, in order to display his knowledge of anatomy, should present the interior, rather than the exterior, conformation of the human body, would Nature, in his hands, assume the same aspect, by which she delights every eye, and moves every heart? A modern Sappho, more skilled in displaying the interior anatomy of her feelings, exhibits them rather to the understanding, than to the eyes and hearts of her readers*: but they who can coolly dissect their passions, cannot excite the sympathy of others. Petrarch both feels like the ancient, and philosophizes like the modern poets. When he paints after the manner of the classics, he is equal if not superior to them. The spirit of

* CORINNE, ou l'Italie.

Laura soars to heaven, angels and blessed souls descend to meet her, and while she looks back upon earth to see if Petrarch follows her, she seems to pause in her aërial way—

Ad or ad or si volge a tergo
Mirando s'io la seguo; e par che aspetti.

These few words contain a sublime and impassioned picture, requiring only the colouring of Titian. The poet could not give us a greater proof of the force and purity of Laura's passion than by delaying her flight to heaven in the expectation of her lover. It is true that these are inferences which we must ourselves draw: but those hearts which are not at once capable of supplying them, do not deserve to have them suggested. When Petrarch complies with the taste of his age, love and religion sometimes give warmth and solemnity even to the coldest antithesis: "Do not lament my fate," says the spirit of Laura to her lover; "for in dying, my days became eternal, and when I appeared to close my eyes, it was then that they were first opened"—

Di me non pianger tu, chè i miei dì fersi,
Morendo, eterni; e nell'eterno lume
Quando mostrai di chiuder gli occhi, apersi.

The lady, whose translations are the fairest ornaments of these pages, has thus admirably rendered this passage:

> No longer mourn my fate! through death my days
> Become eternal!—to eternal light
> These eyes, which seemed in darkness close, I raise!
> LADY DACRE.

But whenever he has occasion to express abstract ideas, or to dive into the depths of the heart, Petrarch does not stop to define or expand; he uses every effort of his art that his observations may pass across the mind of his reader with the flash and rapidity of lightning. —"I know," says he, "how eagerly we pursue her who flies from us, and yet how we fear to overtake her." As every person who has loved, has found himself in this situation, he is the more ready to acquiesce in an observation which follows it, equally just, though not equally familiar—" I know that a lover may become so completely imbued with the thoughts of his mistress, as to believe almost in his identity with her—"

> So della mia nemica cercar l'orme
> E temer di trovarla—e so in qual guisa
> L'amante nell'amato si trasforme.

IX. A MODERN writer, bound to construct poetry less on the poetical principles of Petrarch, than on the analytical taste of his own times, could not render this passage but with double the number of lines—

> I know what hope and fear assail the mind
> When I pursue my love, yet dread to find;
> I know the strange and sympathetic tie,
> When, soul in soul transfused, a fond ally
> For ever seems another and the same,
> Or change with mutual love their mortal frame.
>
> BOYD'S Transl.

But, besides this amplification, these lines have nothing to do with *mutual love;* for the poet expressly calls Laura *his enemy* in them: and it would seem that his translator had rather in view a passage of the Epistle of Eloisa—

> Oh! happy state! when souls each other draw,
> When love is liberty, and nature law:
> All then is full, possessing and possest,
> No craving void left aching in the breast;
> Ev'n thought meets thought, ere from the lips it part;
> And each warm wish springs mutual from the heart;
> This sure is bliss (if bliss on earth there be),
> And once the lot of Abelard and me.

This school of poetical analysis, which the admirable taste of Pope brought to such perfec-

tion, belongs, if I may venture to give an opinion, more exclusively to the English, and is of early date. The notion expressed by Petrarch in the single line,

L'amante nell'amato si trasforme,

Ben Jonson has thus amplified into metaphysical detail:

It is a flame and ardour of the mind,
Dead in the proper corpse, quick in another's:
Transfers the lover into the loved:
That he or she, that loves, engraves or stamps
The idea of what they love, first in themselves;
Or, like the glasses, so their minds take in
The forms of their beloved, and them reflect.

Some passages in Petrarch are, no doubt, too compressed and obscure; yet so much is the reader hurried along by the warmth and passion of the lover, that he fancies he understands what in reality demands some meditation to unravel. It would seem that if we do not conceive very distinctly the thoughts of a poet, his lines must lose much of their effect; still whatever is deeply felt, we think is distinctly conceived by us,—and it is just when we are doubting whether we can soar with him above the precincts of the earth, that Petrarch contrives to insinuate himself into the inmost

folds of our hearts; and the moment we feel with him, we are willing to admit the truth of his visions. He exclaims that "Heaven and Nature have united their efforts to exhibit their fairest work in Laura"—

Chi vuol veder quantunque può Natura,
E il Ciel fra noi, venga a mirar costei—

Again,

Le stelle, il Cielo, e gli elementi a prova
Tutte lor arti ed ogni estrema cura
Poser nel vivo lume in cui Natura
Si specchia—

"That Laura came invested with all her virtues from the planet which she inhabited before she descended on earth"—

In tale stella due begli occhi vidi
Tutti pien'd'onestate, e di dolcezza—

"That Laura's beauty existed in the conception of the Divinity before the creation of the universe"—

In qual parte del Cielo, in quale Idea
Era l'esempio?

Yet in this very sonnet which developes the Platonic theory—"that all objects which fall under the senses of mankind are only copies of

models more or less perfect, which have existed from all eternity in the mind of the Divinity,"—the poet abruptly exclaims—"Yet all her celestial beauties conspire only to my guilty death!"

Bench'è la somma di mia morte rea!

Thus the brilliancy of the description is masterly shadowed forth with a single line, which reminds us that, if Laura be an angel, her lover at least is a mortal, who suffers like ourselves.

X. ONE of those few poets whose inspirations are combined with a sober and deep insight into the mysteries of their art, has observed, "that we have a pleasure in the poet's representations of life, from our attachment to life itself: all imitations of objects have a certain value to the mind, as the resemblances and records of a perishable existence*."—The truth of this remark, and its application to works of imagination, may be fully understood by any person who considers, that our attachment to life springs from the consciousness of our existence:—that such consciousness is pro-

* CAMPBELL'S Lectures on Poetry.

duced by the action of our faculties:—that this action fatigues and exhausts us:—and that we, therefore, oppose to it a constant desire of repose. We can thus explain our conflicting propensities to restlessness and inaction under which all men, more or less, occasionally labour. I believe that the motion and the equilibrium of our intellectual faculties is sustained, like the palpitation of our heart, by a continual oscillation towards contrary directions; and that as soon as that oscillation stops, life ceases. We are always seeking repose, and for this very reason can never obtain it. When we do obtain it by absolute inactivity, our existence is rendered wearisome; and it is then that we tremble at the thought that life is passing away, and at the approach of the only real calm, which is death. Yet, as the complete repose of our faculties stupifies us, so the violent agitation of our own passions overwhelms us:—the representation of the passions of others, therefore, is agreeable, because it renders us conscious of our existence by exciting but not distressing us, and conveys to us at once the pleasures of agitation and repose. The representation of love has the greatest influence upon mankind, because the other passions, the seeds of which

are contained in every human breast, require the aid of circumstances, which to many persons never occur, to develope them; whereas love and death are, as Dante says of the sun, "the greatest ministers of Nature;"—it is by love only that she can reproduce her creations which death is perpetually destroying. But love is seen, by almost all writers, under those outward appearances with which it may be incidentally clothed by the peculiar manners of each nation and age. Thus novels seldom please the next generation, because they represent rather the accidental and transitory forms, than the inward nature, of love. But when a great poet describes his own heart, his picture of love will draw tears from the eyes of every man in every age. Although Petrarch raises this passion to the level of his own mind, and adorns it according to the metaphysical theories and the manners of his time, he still brings before our eyes many resemblances and records of our own feelings. Perhaps he is the most successful among those poets, "who surprise us with traits of nature that have escaped our observation, or faded from our memories, and affect us as if they restored to us a lost or absent friend, with all the tender illusion, though without the indis-

tinctness, of a dream." In Petrarch's poetry we meet with every little circumstance of our passion—the pains—the pleasures—the hopes—the fears we have experienced; and sometimes by a single line he transports us back again to live with the person who was once dearest to us, and who may have long ago disappeared from our eyes, and almost from our recollection. The loftiness of his style and the ornament of his images, so far from repelling us, draw us to him, because he seems to employ every effort of his talents to make us the spectators and companions of his happiness or of his misery.—"Here she sang so sweetly; and here she sat. Here she turned, and there she paused; here her beautiful eyes penetrated my soul, and here she spoke to me—there she smiled, and there her countenance changed. With such thoughts does Love, who is thy master and mine, fill my mind both night and day"—

Qui cantò dolcemente; e qui s' assise:
Quì si rivolse, e qui ritenne il passo;
Qui co' begli occhi mi trafisse il core;
Qui disse una parola, e qui sorrise;
Qui cangiò il viso. In questi pensier, lasso
Notte e dì tiemmi il signor nostro Amore.

XI. It is chiefly in the expression of grief that Petrarch enters into every heart, and that all hearts enter into his. Neatness of diction —delicacy of sentiment—Platonic ecstasy, all yield to the violence of his grief; and we witness the dreadful conflict of reason with despair—of passion with religion. The remembrance of his love, and the remorse of his guilty desires, penetrate his heart; and whilst he seems ready to destroy himself, he is checked by the fear only of passing from one misery to a greater—

Se sapessi per Morte essere scarco
Del pensier amoroso che mi atterra,
Con le mie mani avrei già posto in terra
Queste membra dogliose e quello incarco:
Ma perch' io temo che sarebbe un varco
Di pianto in pianto, e d'una in altra guerra—

Oh! if this cankering thought—this torturing dream
In endless death these hands might hope to close;
Soon should my wearied limbs on earth repose,
And the damp sod a welcome bed I'd deem.
But still I fear to tempt the awful stream,
To fly from strife to strife—from woe to woes.

When he seeks consolation from Heaven, from mankind, and from all the objects that surround him, our sympathy with the man makes us almost forget our admiration of the poet;

because we see, that, like every creature who feels extremely miserable, he fancies that he has inspired all nature with his own affliction—

Poor solitary bird, that pour'st thy lay,
Or haply mournest the sweet season gone:
As chilly night and winter hurry on,
And day-light fades, and summer flies away;
If as the cares that swell thy little throat;
Thou knew'st alike the woes that wound my rest,
Oh, thou wouldst house thee in this kindred breast,
And mix with mine thy melancholy note.
Yet little know I our's are kindred ills:
She still may live the object of thy song:
Not so for me stern Death or Heaven wills!
But the sad season, and less grateful hour,
And of past joy and sorrow thoughts that throng
Prompt my full heart this idle lay to pour.—LADY DACRE.

Vago augelletto, che cantando vai,
Ovver piangendo il tuo tempo passato,
Veggendoti la notte e'l verno a lato,
E 'l dì dopo le spalle, e i mesi gai;
Se come i tuoi gravosi affanni sai,
Così sapessi il mio simile stato;
Verresti in grembo a questo sconsolato
A partir seco i dolorosi guai.
I' non so se le parti sarian pari;
Che quella cui tu piangi è forse in vita;
Di ch'a me Morte e 'l Ciel son tanto avari:
Ma la stagione e l'ora men gradita,
Col membrar de' dolci anni e degli amari,
A parlar teco con pietà m'invita.

His poetry about Laura finishes with one of his most beautiful odes. It is addressed to the blessed Virgin, whom as she had known human affections, and had combined in herself the three gentlest dearest names on earth—of mother, daughter, and wife—he hopes will be merciful to him—

> Tre dolci e cari nomi hai in te raccolti,
> Madre, Figliuola, e Sposa.

Then with a sublimity and pathos which no poet has ever surpassed, he implores, through her assistance, that he may cease in his old age to lament over the ashes of one who had filled his life with dangers and with tears.

XII. ALTHOUGH this description of poetry had been in use with the Sicilians and the Provençals for more than two centuries, it was seldom inspired by genius or passion. Professional lovers addressed rhymes to their mistresses, which singers and wandering troubadours repeated at the banquets of their patrons. According to Dante's opinion and that of his friend Guido Cavalcanti, they were rather *dicitori per rima*, than deserving of the name of poets*. No sooner was Italian poetry en-

* Acciò che non ne pigli alcuna baldanza persona grossa, dico: Che nè i poeti parlano così senza ragione, nè quelli che rimano deono parlare così, non avendo alcuno ragionamento

nobled by Platonic speculations on love, than the predecessors of Petrarch declared that vulgar souls were neither capable, nor worthy, of being initiated into such a passion. Guido Cavalcanti, when a lady intreated him to write on the sentiments she inspired, professed "that he could not expect to be understood, except by elevated minds"—

Donna mi priega, perch' io voglia dire
D' un accidente che sovente è fero
Ed è si altero che è chiamato Amore;
Sì chi lo niega possa il ver sentire!—
Ed io non spero ch' uom di basso core
A tal ragione porti conoscenza.

This canzone has been noticed by some celebrated commentators, among others Pico della Mirandola, but it has not been made less unintelligible. Dante has himself commented on his own love-verses; an example which was followed two centuries afterwards by Lorenzo de' Medici, whose *Theory of Love* is one of the very few tracts that either escaped the unwearied researches, or did not deserve the notice, of the historian, whose illustrations of the

in loro di quello che dicono; però che gran vergogna sarebbe a colui che rimasse cose sotto vesta di figura, o di colore rettorico, e domandato, non sapesse dinudare le sue parole da cotal vesta, in guisa che avessero verace intendimento. E questo mio primo amico ed io ne sapemo ben di quelli che così rimano stoltamente.—DANTE, *Vita nuova*.

age of the Medici's has entitled his name to the gratitude of the Italians*. By a comparison of some verses, in which Guido, Dante, Petrarch, and Giusto de Conti, describe the supernatural beauty of their mistresses, it is easy to trace the progress of this sort of poetry, and to perceive that its perfection had been nearly attained by Dante†. Petrarch subsequently managed it in a way that no other poet has ever been able to approach; but he has no claim to its invention: the metrical and musical laws of this kind of lyric poetry were already established‡. Little as the *Sonetti* and *Canzoni* may appear to our modern composers of operas to be susceptible of music, it is not on that account the less true, that these terms are derived from *Suono* and *Canto*, and that poets often added notes of music to their stanzas. In the manuscripts which are still preserved at Florence, of Franco Sachetti and other contemporaries of Petrarch, the fol-

* Appendix, No. III.—I must express my personal gratitude to Mr. Roscoe, for having sent me, whilst occupied in the correction of this sheet, his "Illustrations, historical and critical, of the Life of Lorenzo de' Medici," recently published, in which, amongst other original and curious documents, he has inserted the Tract in question.

† Appendix, No. IV.

‡ The *Summa Artis Rithmicæ* by Antonio da Tempo, date 1332.

lowing note is to be found at the head of some of their sonnets: *Intonatum per Francum—Scriptor dedit sonum.* The system of Italian music, by counterpoint, had been created three centuries before their age by Guido d'Arezzo; and it is only in our days that it has been rendered refined and complicated, by the followers of the German school. Poetry was not then in Italy the mere *caput mortuum* of music; and the human voice, instead of being a subordinate accessory to the orchestra, filled the most prominent part, and was accompanied by inanimate instruments, only so far as was necessary to support it, and to regulate its modulations. The words might then strike the ear with less astonishment than the tunes; but they spoke more forcibly to the heart and more usefully to the mind. Petrarch poured forth his verses to the sound of his lute, which he bequeathed in his will to a friend*; and his voice was sweet, flexible, and of great compass†. All the love-poetry of his predecessors, except that of Cino, wants sweetness of numbers; but the sweetness of Pe-

* *Magistro Thomæ Bombasio de Ferraria lego leutum meum bonum, ut eum sonet, non pro vanitate sæculi fugacis, sed ad laudem Dei æterni.*—Petr. Testam.

† *Doctus insuper Lyra mirè cecinit—Fuit vocis sonoræ atque redundantis suavitatis tantæ atque dulcedinis.*—PHIL. VILLANI, Vit. Petr.

trarch is enlivened with a variety, a rapidity, and a glow, which no Italian lyric has ever possessed in an equal degree. The power of preserving, and at the same time of diversifying, the rhythm, belongs to him alone—his melody is perpetual, and yet never wearies the ear. His *canzoni* (a species of composition partaking of the ode and the elegy, the character and form of which are exclusively Italian) contain stanzas sometimes of twenty lines. He has placed the cadences, however, in such a manner as to allow the voice to rest at the end of every three or four verses, and has fixed the recurrence of the same rhyme and the same musical pauses at intervals sufficiently long to avoid monotony, and sufficiently short to preserve harmony. It is not difficult, therefore, to give credit to Filippo Villani, when he assures us, "that the musical modulation of the verses which Petrarch addressed to Laura flowed so melodiously, that even the most grave could not refrain from repeating them*."

XIII. METASTASIO, to please the court of Vienna, the musicians, and the public of his day, and to gratify the delicacy of his own

* *Tanta siquidem dulcedine rithmi fluunt, ut ab eorum pronunciatione et sonis, gravissimi nesciebant abstinere.*—PHIL. VILLANI, Vit. Petr.

feminine taste, has reduced his language and versification to so limited a number of words, phrases, and cadences, that they seem always the same, and in the end produce only the effect of a flute, which conveys rather delightful melody than quick and distinct sensations. Petrarch, on the contrary, has not only vigorously grasped and beautifully used all the abundance of words—all the variety of numbers—all the graces and energy and idioms of his own language, but he has naturalized those of the Provençal and Spanish poets. No term which he has employed is become obsolete; and each of his phrases may be, and still is, written without quaintness. At the same time that he improves the materials in which the Italian language already abounded, he seems to create it afresh, for it was in reality both native and foreign to him. When he was only nine years old, he was taken into France, where he passed his youth, and the greater portion of his life. His parents, from whom he might have acquired the Tuscan idiom, died when he was still a youth. In the frequent journeys which he made into Italy, he lived every where for considerable periods except at Florence, where he passed only three or four weeks. In order to form a style which should be quite his own, he assures us that he

never possessed a copy of Dante's great poem, whose diction he affects to despise*. It was only near the close of his life that Petrarch began to repent of not having availed himself of the "vulgar language,"—"a new-discovered field which had fallen into the hands of unskilful husbandmen, and which still remained to be cleared†." I am indebted to the library and liberality of my Lord Holland, for the only specimen I have ever seen of the Italian prose of Petrarch‡. It is a manuscript, in Petrarch's own hand, of two letters, which, far from possessing the elegance and grammatical correctness of Dante and Boccacio, or indeed of their minor contemporaries, are remarkable only for the warmth of feeling and perspicuity of thought peculiar to his style. If, instead of devoting his life to an ancient language, in which there were already so many inimitable authors, he had written his numerous works in Italian, he might have left models of every sort of composition. His great power in the poetry of a language which he had cultivated so little, is one of those secret wonders which genius

* See the Epistle of Boccace to Petrarch: *Italiæ jam certus honor.*

† *Hic vulgaris stylus modo inventus, vastatoribus crebris, et nullo squallidus colono.*—Senilium Lib. 5. Ep. 2. 3.

‡ Appendix, No. V.

works unconsciously even to him who possesses it; as seeds which chance has scattered in some congenial spot, will sometimes spontaneously quicken to greater luxuriance, than the most industrious art could have effected in a less favoured soil.

XIV. THE important object of Petrarch's study and ambition was to dissipate the darkness which, during the middle ages, had enveloped the literature of the ancients. But what genius and ardour could have been equal to the magnitude of this undertaking? He has so far succeeded, however, in clearing the road to the study of antiquity as to acquire the title, which he still justly retains, of the Restorer of Classical Learning—"Are you not ashamed," wrote he to the Romans, "that the wrecks of your ancient grandeur, spared by the inundation of the Barbarians, are daily sold by your miscalculating avarice to foreigners? And that Rome is no where less known and less loved than in Rome*?" Nor did the enthusiasm of Petrarch for ancient monuments prevent him from describing them with the taste of a critic†. He set the first example of collecting medals as the best guides

* Hortatio ad Nicol. Laurent. Petr. Op. vol. i. p. 596.

† Famil. Lib. 6. ep. 2.

through the labyrinth of chronologies and genealogies of dynasties disappeared from the world. We still reap the benefit of those manuscripts which he indefatigably sought after in every corner of Europe*, and multiplied without sparing money when he was poor, or labour when he was old and infirm; and such was his anxiety for their correctness that he often submitted to the drudgery of a transcriber. He found the Latin language,

> Not verdant then
> With foliage, but of dusky hue; not light
> The boughs and tapering, but with knares deform'd
> And matted thick: fruits there were none, but thorns.

Yet under his toils it revived with a freshness which made him to be looked upon as having brought back the Augustan age—a merit, however, which the united and incessant exertions of six generations of learned men, from his times to those of Leo X., have scarcely attained. Still, those whose claim to the title of accomplished scholars rests on elegancies painfully gleaned from the classics, are not justified in sneering at the latinity of Petrarch. It seems that in modelling his style upon the Romans, he was unwilling to neg-

* De Rem. utriusque fortunæ. Lib. 1.

lect entirely the Fathers of the Church, whose phraseology was more appropriate to his subjects; and the public affairs being, at that period, transacted in Latin, he could not always reject many of those expressions which, although originating from barbarous ages, had been sanctioned by the adoption of all the Universities, and were the more intelligible to his readers. In sacrificing purity, he gained freedom, fluency, and warmth; and his prose, though not a model for imitation, is beyond the reach of imitators, because it is original and his own.

XV. In Latin poetry, Petrarch could not be successful while its natural beauties were so slightly felt, that he himself, in his youth, was guilty of writing hexameters in rhyme*. The pronunciation, from which all the metrical systems of the ancients sprang, had already experienced so great a change, that he was often obliged to guess, and not always happily, at the quantity of syllables. Had he possessed the highest poetical powers which Nature ever granted to a mortal, he could not have been, in a dead language, a more than ordinary poet. The magical combination of harmony, splen-

dour, freshness, energy, spirit, pathos, and grace in describing every object of creation, however insignificant—every obscure and fleeting idea, and all the commonest feelings of the heart, is effected only by words; but it can never be effected unless the poet masters his diction so absolutely as to re-cast it into a language of his own creation; and this is, perhaps, the grand advantage by which the early poets have outstripped all their successors. But the more the laws of a language become unalterable, the more is genius cramped by fetters; and if voluntarily chosen, it deserves no sympathy. Petrarch, however, submitted to them, as the only means of commanding the admiration of Europe; and he obtained it. For his coronation in the Capitol he was indebted to the first books of his AFRICA, an epic poem on the exploits of Scipio. While the ballad-singers gained a livelihood by chaunting his sonnets in the public streets, the learned considered them scarcely worthy of his powers, and were proud to enrich their libraries with a fragment of that poem. "I deny" —he wrote to Boccacio—"but I deny in vain: he whom I refuse sends first one intercessor, then he sends another. The importunity is at once so ingenuous and so modest!

I could not carry my refusal so far as to offend the rights of friendship, and yielded at last. If I rightly remember, I gave him about thirty-four lines from the AFRICA; and as they demanded still more time and correction, I warmly insisted that no other person should see them, which he as warmly promised; but which he forgot to observe, if I mistake not, the same day*." These verses are to be found among those Miscellanea which, before the diffusion of learning, were ascribed at one time to the real, at another to apocryphal, authors,—and as they relate to the death of Mago, the brother of Hannibal, a transcriber of the fifteenth century attributed them to Silius Italicus, whose poem on the Carthaginian war had been recently discovered by Poggio. About three hundred and fifty years later, a French critic, in re-editing this poem, charged Petrarch with having found and suppressed it, and in order that his plagiarisms might remain still more effectually concealed, with having adulterated the purity of the original lines†. After

* Senil. Lib. 11. Epist. 1.

† *Habe Silium cultiorem, egregio auctum fragmento, quod sibi minus verecunde, nonnullis mutatis, vindicaverat, suoque poemati Africæ VI. adsuere non est veritus Fr. Petrarca.*—LEFEBVRE VILLEBRUNE, Epist. ad Villoison præfix. ad Silii edit. Lutetiæ, 1781.

emending the episode of the death of Mago, the critic inserted it in the sixteenth book of Silius; without, however, expunging those passages from the following books in which Mago re-appears living. Besides, in the sixth book of the AFRICA, Mago speaks and dies more like a gray-haired philosopher than a young hero; and whatever traits of individual character he displays belong to Petrarch, with whom it was hardly possible to write a sentence without pourtraying himself. This internal evidence is more convincing in the translation, by a great poet of our age*; and from the original annexed to it, scholars will pronounce whether any conjectural emendations could grace this fragment with the elegance of Silius—the least imaginative of poets, but the only one who approaches the language and versification of Virgil.

XVI. THE more discoveries Petrarch made of the works of the ancients, the more competent he became to judge of their excellence; and so deeply he felt their superiority, that those Latin poems in which for so many years he had reposed all his hopes of glory, caused

* APPENDIX, No. I.

him in the end an inward mortification, which the applauses of the world only served to betray*. On hearing some lines of the AFRICA repeated at Verona, Petrarch burst into tears of shame†. The copies circulated after his death could not have been taken from the manuscript which he had prepared, but which he had not the courage to publish, and soon after threw into the fire — "Seldom has a father felt more agony in placing the corpse of his only son on the pile, than I have felt in destroying all my labours: think on it, and you will hardly refrain from tears‡." His several eclogues and elegies, and his treatises — ON HIS OWN IGNORANCE AND THAT OF MANY OTHERS — ON MEMORABLE EVENTS, particularly of his own time — ON REMEDIES FOR PROSPERITY AND MISERY — ON THE AD-

* *Quotiescumque Africæ mentio incidisset, toties conturbabatur, molestiamque mente concæptam, foris facies indicabat.*— VERGERIUS Senior, Vita Petr.

† Trovandosi il Petrarca in Verona, e sentendo cantare i versi dell' Africa, pianse dolendosi non poterla nascondere affatto.—BECCADELLI, Vita del Petr.

‡ *Rarò unquam pater aliquis tam mœstus filium unicum in rogum misit: quanto id fecerim dolore, et omnes labores meos eo in opere perditos, acriter tecum volvas, vix ipse lachrymas contineas.*—These words are repeated by Vergerius, who was living at Padua at the same time that Petrarch was.

66563

MINISTRATION OF A COMMONWEALTH — ON THE DUTIES OF A COMMANDER OF ARMIES —AN ITINERARY THROUGH SYRIA—an unfinished series of LIVES OF ILLUSTRIOUS ROMANS FROM ROMULUS TO TITUS — APOLOGIES and INVECTIVES against his adversaries—all these, besides some others that remain still inedited, are probably the lesser portion of his Latin volumes. Whilst he was composing, he fancied himself the Achilles, and when he was revising, the Thersites, of authors; and often, when the death of his friends impressed him more deeply with the vanity of life, he burned his writings*. The only one for which he continued to have a constant predilection was his book, ON SOLITUDE, which he called *Liber maximus rerum mearum.* He added another, ON THE PEACEABLE LIFE OF MONKS, which he addressed to his younger brother Gerardo, who having experienced all the joys and disappointments of youth, retired, after the death of a beloved mistress, to end his days in a Carthusian monastery—"My brother and myself," Petrarch exclaimed after Laura's death,

* *Incredibilem rem audies, veram tamen, mille vel amplius seu omnis generis sparsa poemata seu familiares epistolas—Vulcano corrigenda tradidi non sine suspiriis.* Petr. apud Tomasinum, f. 28.

" were fettered alike. Thy hand, O my God! hath burst our chains asunder: but are we both delivered? He, indeed, hath escaped*." It was then that he destroyed many letters in which he entertained his intimate friends about Laura: but being aware that others were preserved and copied, he collected a great number of them, foreseeing, perhaps, that they would ultimately preserve his Latin writings from neglect.

XVII. Before he was absolutely disgusted with society, Petrarch travelled, " examining every thing with unwearied attention, observing the manners and characters of nations, and drawing comparisons between all other European countries and Italy†." The early steps of his own country towards civilization, and its present decrepitude, justify both the exaggerated patriotism of Petrarch‡, and the severe censures of modern statesmen, which though sometimes just, are rarely equitable. Those

* *Cum ego et frater meus gemino laqueo teneremur, utrumque contrivit manus tua: sed non ambo pariter liberati sumus: ille quidem evolavit.*—Epist. Var. 28.

† *Cuncta circumspiciens, videndi cupidus explorandique—contemplatus sollicitè mores hominum—singula cum nostris conferens.*—Famil. Lib. 1. epist. 3. 4.—Lib. 5. epist. 4.

‡ Senil. Lib. 9. ep. 1.

whose minds can survey the human race in all its vicissitudes and epochs, know that seasons of glory and calamity are appointed for every nation, and judge them with candour. Yet although Petrarch raises his countrymen at the expense of foreigners, he evinces rather the confidence of a practical observer, than the conceited positiveness of a professional author of travels; and considering the information we may still gather from his correspondence on the events, manners, and characters of his age, he deserves to be placed amongst the earliest and most enlightened travellers of Europe. These letters are still unpublished; and some others are only confusedly arranged in all the editions; many are to be found quoted at considerable length by old historians. He was not only an eye-witness, but his remarks, by often seeming to be the effect of sudden and powerful impressions, bear a stamp of sincerity. The following is a translation of one of his letters to Cardinal Colonna, which Angelo de Costanzo inserted in his History of Naples—

* Hæc ter à te, Didyme, recitata sint super terram patruum nostrorum, ut misereantur sui omnes: nam sicut autumnus et hiems, sic gloria et calamitas visitant, certis tempestatibus sæculorum, singulos populos terræ.—DIDYMI CLERICI Hypercalypseos, cap. 18. ver. 46.

"HORACE, wishing to describe a violent tempest, gave it the appellation of a POETICAL TEMPEST; and it seems to me that he could not more concisely or happily have represented its terrible sublimity; because neither sky nor ocean can in its rage produce an effect which may not be equalled or surpassed by the descriptions of poetry; and, if ever I have leisure, I will make yesterday's storm the subject of my verse.

"It was indeed one general commotion of the Mediterranean and Adriatic; but I will call it the Neapolitan tempest, because it found me, against my will, in the port of Naples; and, since the eagerness of the courier to depart leaves me not time enough to record it fully, I beg you will be assured that no man ever beheld the elements of earth and water in more fearful conspiracy.

"This visitation from heaven was foretold, several days before its occurrence, by the bishop of a little neighbouring island, who rested his prediction on certain astronomical calculations; but, as it rarely happens that prophets penetrate the whole truth of any future event, so he unluckily announced as the completion of the catastrophe, 'that a terrible earthquake would ensue, by which Naples itself would be

destroyed, on the 25th of November.' This advertisement obtained so much credit, that the greater part of the inhabitants actually gave up every other consideration to the grand concerns of religion, imploring the mercy of God, and his forgiveness of their past offences, as if the following day were infallibly to be their last. On the other hand, many laughed at the idle prediction, observing how little faith was due to astrologers, the more especially as only a few days had passed since the last earthquake. In the midst of these apprehensions and encouragements, (of which the former however predominated) I retired, on the evening of the 24th, just before sunset, to my apartment, and in my way thither met almost all the females of the City (in whom the sense of shame had been swallowed up by that of danger) bare-footed and with hair dishevelled, crowding to the churches, with their babes in their arms, crying and imploring God for mercy. As night came on, the sky was more than usually serene. My servants went to bed immediately after supper. For my own part, I proposed to stay up and watch the setting of the moon, at that time (I think) in her first quarter. The window which looks to the west was left open, and I saw her as

about midnight she hid herself behind St. Martin's mount, her face much darkened, and partially covered by clouds. I then closed the window, and stretched myself on my bed, where after lying for some time awake, I was just falling asleep, when I was roused by the noise of an earthquake. The casement was burst open, the light which I always keep burning in my chamber, was extinguished, and the whole house shook to its very foundations. In this state, between sleeping and waking, and assailed by the terror of impending destruction, I ran to the cloisters of the monastery in which I reside, and where we groped about in the dark (having only the glimmering of one dull lamp to direct us) to receive and administer whatever consolation was in our power. Here we were shortly met by the abbot—a very pious man—with his monks in procession, who, terrified by the tempest, were bearing the holy cross and reliques of saints, and preceded by lighted torches, with devout prayers and exclamations, in their way to the church to sing matins to the Virgin. This having inspired me with courage, I accompanied them to the church, where we all with one accord threw ourselves prostrate on the ground, and did nothing else but with loud

uplifted voices implore the divine mercy and forgiveness, expecting every minute the sacred building to fall, and bury us in its ruins.

"It would be much too long to recount all the horrors of that infernal night; and although the truth very far exceeds all power of description, yet I fear to be thought guilty of exaggeration when I exclaim, What deluges of water! what wind! what thunder! what terrible rumbling in the heavens! what fearful tremblings of the earth! what vehement commotion in the sea! what shrieks of amazed and distracted multitudes! The long night seemed extended by magic art to twice its actual duration; and when morning came, its approach was announced to us rather by the clock, than by any corresponding light in the firmament. The priests robed themselves for the celebration of mass, while we, not having courage to lift our faces to heaven, remained stretched on the ground in prayer and supplication. Though day had broke, it was still as dark as night. The multitudes in the upper part of the city had begun to disperse; but towards the seashore the noise seemed to increase, and the clattering of horses was heard in the street below. What this could mean it was impossible to ascertain; but, made bold by despair,

I at last mounted on horseback myself, resolved to see, even though I should perish.

"Great God! who ever heard of such things as I then beheld? The oldest seamen declared that the like was never before witnessed. In the midst of the port were seen an infinite number of poor wretches scattered about on the sea, and struggling to gain the shore, who, by the violence and fury of the waves, were battered about till they looked like so many eggs dashed to pieces on the beach. The whole space was filled with drowned and half-drowned bodies—some with their sculls fractured—others with broken arms or legs—others with their bowels gushing out: and the screams of men and women who lived near the beach were no less terrific than the uproar of the elements. The very sands, on which, the day before, you walked in ease and safety, were become more dangerous than the faro of Messina, or the whirlpool of Charybdis. A thousand, or more, of the Neapolitan nobility came to the shore, on horseback, as if to solemnize the funeral obsequies of their country; and, when I found myself among them, I began to be of better cheer, seeing that, if I were doomed to perish, I should die with the honour of knighthood. Soon the dreadful rumour came

to our ears, that the ground on which we trod had been undermined by the sea, and was beginning to open. We fled precipitately, and saved ourselves; but the spectacle we then beheld, was the most terrible ever witnessed by mortal eye—the heavens so commingled! the sea so implacably turbulent! the waves mountain-high—and in colour neither black nor blue, as in more ordinary tempests, but perfectly white, like hills of snow, rolling over the whole expanse from Capri to Naples.

"The young Queen, bare-footed, and attended by a numerous train of females, went to visit the churches dedicated to the blessed Virgin. No vessel in the harbour was capable of resisting the violence of the gale; and three gallies which had arrived from Cyprus, and were to depart that morning, were seen by sympathizing thousands to go down without a soul being saved. Three other large ships, which had anchored in the port, struck against each other, and sunk, and all on board perished. Of all the vessels, one only escaped, on board of which were no less than four hundred galley-slaves who had been engaged in the Sicilian war; by the strength of these malefactors alone the ship being enabled to stem the fury of the overwhelming element;

and even they were quite exhausted,' when, at the approach of night, beyond all hope, and contrary to the universal expectation, the sky cleared, the wind abated, and the sea grew calm. Thus the most infamous of the sufferers are those alone who escaped a watery grave. Alas! that the words of Lucan should have thus proved true—'that fortune favours the wicked,'—or that such is the pleasure of God —or that they, who in the hour of trial are most indifferent whether they live or die, are the securest from danger! This is the history of yesterday."—November the 27th, 1343.

XVIII. In the numerous letters written by Petrarch towards the decline of life, and arranged by him under the title of Epistolæ Seniles, the old solitary man, while conversing with his most intimate friends, intended to be heard by the world. They are full of pathos and wisdom; of pedantry and eloquence; of christian self-denial and puerile self-complacency: and there is a continual struggle between his natural frankness and the caution of age. However, his correspondents were indebted to him for a profusion of quotations, which, in the scarcity of books in that age, made them acquainted with many passages of

classical writers. Possibly they indulged, almost as much as we do, in gossiping about all the concerns, great and small, public and personal, historical and fabulous, of their celebrated contemporaries; but editors of monthly and quarterly publications, of daily newspapers, and of biographical dictionaries of the dead and the living, had not as yet either the professional inducements or the means to penetrate into the privacy of domestic retirement, Petrarch, allured by the idea that his celebrity would magnify into importance all the ordinary occurrences of his life, satisfied the curiosity both of his friends and foes by seriously telling them, how

> He did all natural functions of a man,
> Ate, drank, and slept, and put his raiment on—

which has afforded this advantage at any rate, that our information is not apocryphal, and that we possess the materials for the most interesting of histories—the history of the mind of a man of genius,—but he still requires, what he has never yet had the good fortune to find, a man of genius for his historian. In Petrarch's letters, as well as in his poems and treatises, we always identify the author with the man who felt himself irresistibly impelled

to develope his own intense feelings. Being endowed with almost all the noble, and with some of the paltry passions, of our nature, and having never attempted to conceal them, he awakens us to reflection upon ourselves, while we contemplate in him a being of our own species, yet different from every other, and whose originality excites even more sympathy than admiration.

AN ESSAY

ON THE CHARACTER

OF

PETRARCH.

AN ESSAY

ON THE CHARACTER

OF

PETRARCH.

E LE COSE PRESENTI E LE PASSATE
MI DANNO GUERRA E LE FUTURE.
PETR. P. II. Son. 4.

I. ABOUT a year before his acquaintance with Laura, Petrarch entered the house of James Colonna, Bishop of Lombes, by whom he was introduced to his brother John, the Cardinal, and appointed tutor to one of their nephews; but he was soon considered as an independent friend, so much so, that Stefano Colonna, the head of the family of the greatest power at Rome, and of the greatest influence at Avignon, regarded him as his own son*. At this time Avignon was the centre of at-

* *Hujus familiæ magnanimum genitorem ita colui, atque ita sibi acceptus fui, ut inter me et quemlibet filiorum nil diceres interesse.*—Ep. ad Post.

traction for men of rank and talent from all nations: Richard of Bury, afterwards bishop of Durham, was there Ambassador of Edward III. Hence Petrarch had early opportunities of acquiring the friendship of the most eminent characters then in Europe, and a more than ordinary insight into the literary and political state of the world. In his thirty-fourth year he obtained from Benedict XII., through the Cardinal's interest, an ecclesiastical benefice*; and retired to Vaucluse, as to a quiet haven, where he might live unmolested by love and ambition, and untainted with the depravities of that court.—"Reverend and most dignified prelate, my much honoured lord," says Petrarch to the Bishop of Lombes, in a letter, which is here published for the first time†, "you invite me to settle at the court of Rome in Avignon, and fill me with the most brilliant hopes of advancement. Now, had I not previously received many the most unequivocal proofs of your great kindness and affection, I might feel disposed to look upon you as the

* Literarum scientia, morum honestas, et alia multiplicia merita probitatis—nec non consideratione dilecti filii nostri Johannis Cardinalis pro te *Capellano continuo commensali suo* humiliter supplicanti.—Benedicti XII. Bull. ad Petr. an. 1335.

† Appendix, No. V.

bitterest enemy your unfortunate friend Francis could possibly have in this world. From the different conversations we have frequently had together, you cannot be ignorant of the great promises I have at times had from his holiness Pope John; insomuch as to raise in my mind a fair expectation of being speedily promoted to some elevated post; and yet here I am, and here I shall ever remain, that poor unfortunate wretch Petrarch. Your long experience in the world must have clearly manifested to you, that nothing is more fallacious and deceitful than the flattering promises of a court; and that the most profligate and the most illiterate of mankind, nay, even the most degenerate of the sons of earth, who, either by simony, favour, or adulation, rise to the highest stations and dignities of the church, are the persons best received there. *O tempora! O mores!* You would think me highly culpable, were I to obtain any thing good by such indirect courses as these. How is it then possible, my dear Sir, that you, who are a man of high birth, honour, and integrity, can propose to me to re-establish myself in that court, where not a single person, professing to be an honest man, and being actually so, would deem it fit to remain without shame to himself, when not

actually driven by want so to do? Besides, were it even possible for me to obtain preferment through the munificence of his Holiness, still the horrid vices of that court are so revolting to my mind, that the very thoughts of them make me sick at heart. Know, that when I withdrew myself from the Papal Courts, I sang forth the Psalm—'When Israel went out of Egypt.' In the cheerful solitudes of Vaucluse, I enjoy a sweet and undisturbed repose, which affords me sufficient leisure to prosecute my studies in peace and tranquillity; and what I may occasionally have to spare from those studies, I pass in relaxation and amusements at Cabrieres. Ah! my friend, were it possible for you to fix your residence in that charming valley of Vaucluse, you would not only be disgusted with the Papal Court, but with all the rest of the world. As to me, it is my firm determination never to behold that court again. Remember me, in the kindest manner, to that most excellent man, Messere Stefano Colonna, your father, as well as to your worthy brother the Cardinal, and continue to honour me with your cordial affection. Vaucluse, 10th of the Calends of June, 1338."

II. THREE years after the date of this letter, Petrarch having been crowned at Rome, his income increased with his reputation. King Robert of Naples then appointed him his chaplain, with the privilege of not attending at court. He returned to Vaucluse, and the Holy See actually forced its patronage upon a writer, whose celebrity, and independence of character, had rendered him truly formidable. He would never take holy orders, that he might not be in a condition to accept a bishoprick, and refused the office of apostolical secretary under three Popes*. In a bull, by which Clement VI. conferred on him an additional benefice, it is expressly declared, "that neither Petrarch, nor any of his friends, had solicited it"†; and the poet did not, therefore, consider that any obligation was imposed on him, by these liberalities, to restrain the vehemence of his pen. In his Latin eclogues, he introduces the shades of the pastors of the church, reproaching each other with their crimes, and consoling themselves by prophesying those of their reigning successor. The Holy See was considered by Petrarch as "the

* Senil. Lib. 1, Ep. 2.—Lib. 12, Ep. 8.

† *Non ad ipsius Francisci, vel alterius pro eo, nobis oblatæ petitionis instantiam, sed de mera nostra Apostolica liberalitate.*

school of errors, the temple of heresy, the manufactory of treasons, and the hell of living men." The Church was "an impudent prostitute, supported by the opulence of her fornicators." He calls Avignon "the drain of all vices, whence the smell rose to pollute even the throne of the Almighty"—

Scuola d'errore, e tempio d'eresia,
Oh fucina d'inganni, oh prigion dira,
Di vivi inferno!——
Putta sfacciata, e dov'hai posto spene?
Negli adulteri tuoi? nelle malnate
Ricchezze tante?——
Nido di tradimenti, in cui si cova
Quanto mal per lo mondo oggi si spande;
Di vin serva, di letti, e di vivande,
In cui lussuria fa l'ultima prova—
Or vivi sì ch'a Dio ne venga il lezzo!

Cecile de Commenge, Vicomtesse de Turenne, secretly bartered her charms to Clement VI., for the power of selling to the public his temporal favours and spiritual indulgences. Other pontiffs have probably been even more profane than he was, but no one ever had a mistress so avaricious and so shameless. Never did luxury and licentiousness prevail so publicly, and so ostentatiously in the pontifical palace. Petrarch shuddered at it, and he describes it

in a way to make his readers shudder: "All that is related of the two Babylons—of Syria, and of Egypt;—all that is said of the four Labyrinths—of Avernus, of Tartarus—is nothing in comparison to this hell of Avignon*." "Priests, bending beneath the weight of years, dancing with their naked adulteresses round the altar; and Beelzebub in the midst of them, stimulating their lusts by mirrors, which reflected their wanton movements and lascivious forms†."—Not satisfied with having sent such a picture in a Latin letter to a friend, Petrarch published it in Italian verse—

Per le camere tue fanciulle e vecchi,
Vanno trescando; e Belzebub in mezzo
Co' mantici, col foco, e con gli specchi.

He was detained, however, at Avignon until his manhood, by the reverses of his family; and Laura afterwards brought him often to a city, of which he never speaks but with horror.

* Epist. sine tit. 5, 8, 10, 11.

† *Spectat hæc Satan ridens, atque impari tripudio delectatus, interque decrepitos, et puellas nudas, arbiter sedens, stupet plus illos agere quàm se hortari; ac ne quis rebus torpor obrepat, ipse interim et seniles lumbos stimulis incitat, et cæcum peregrinis follibus ignem ciet.*—Epist. sine titulo.

III. At the period of the subsequent reformation, his invectives against the court of Avignon rendered Petrarch infamous amongst the French Catholics*: but, in a semi-civilized age, a great poet is radiant with divinity†; and in the fourteenth century, the executioner would not place his hand on a head which had been hallowed by the laurel‡. Innocent VI. believed that Petrarch was a magician, but he dared not bring him to the stake—and notwithstanding the poet called him "a suspicious and indolent bear, whose coarseness caused the luxury and the easiness of his predecessor to be forgiven§," yet he endeavoured to soothe him by honours and attentions; whilst the Cardinals of the greatest influence could not induce him to kiss his foot‖. To indulge in the necessity, which he experienced, of saying every thing he thought and felt, Petrarch availed himself of a celebrity

* Fleury, *Hist. Eccles.* vol. x. l. 97.—Racine, *Abrégé de l'Hist. Eccles.* vol. vi. p. 441.—Coeffetau, *Myst. d'Iniquité*, p. 1965.

† *Sanctum poetæ nomen, quod nunquam barbaries violavit.*—Cicero pro Archia, sect. 5.

‡ Eclog. 8.—Famil. Lib. 13. Ep. 6.

§ ——————— *Tristis inersque*
Mitia præduris excuset facta repulsis.—Eclog. 6.

‖ Famil. Lib. 16. Ep. 2.—Senil. Lib. 2. Ep. 6.

which no author, during his life, ever enjoyed in an equal degree. Still he was unhappy, even on that account: "This laurel," says he, "without adding any thing to my knowledge, has increased my own discontent, and the envy of others*." The most distinguished men warned him, "that nothing is more important, and at the same time more difficult, than to preserve a great reputation:" and he answered, "This torment has, if I dare say so, hung like a fatality about me from my earliest days. Many judge of me, whom I have neither known, nor wish to know, nor think worthy of being known†." Still, to preserve his celebrity, he stooped to the most vehement declamations against many enemies provoked alike by his transcendant talents and by his irritability which could not bear the slightest animadversion on his writings or manners. Even in his will, he designates those persons who thought him richer than he was as "the mad populace‡." To the intolerance of his opinions, he sometimes adds a pedantic gravity and a false modesty, which tarnish the natural candour of

* Epist. ad Post.

† Famil. Lib. 7. Ep. 10.—Senil. Lib. 2. Ep. 3.

‡ *Ego Franciscus Petrarcha scripsi, qui testamentum aliud fecissem, si essem dives, ut vulgus insanum putat.*—Testam. Petr.

his character. Whilst he calls himself "a simple individual of the human flock," he compares himself indirectly to the most illustrious men in history; and cannot inform posterity of the origin of his family, without borrowing the words of Augustus*. It was Petrarch chiefly who familiarized his fellow-citizens with the personages of ancient Italy, and the people were naturally disposed to consider him as one of the number. They uttered his name with adoration: artisans prepared their houses to receive him when he travelled through the country, and he preferred them to the palaces of the great. Princes and magistrates, followed by courtiers and crowds of citizens, went forth to meet him at the gates of their towns. Inquisitive travellers of every nation, with the indelicate importunity of the genus, anxious to smooth the way to his acquaintance, sent him magnificent presents, of which he proudly complains†. A blind old man performed a long journey on foot, in the hope that he might

* *Vestro de grege unus: fui autem mortalis homuncio, nec magnæ admodum, sed nec vilis originis: familia, ut de se ait Augustus, antiqua.*—Epist. ad Poster.

† *Atque ad admirationis augmentum fuere aliqui, qui præmissis magnis muneribus sequerentur, quasi liberalitate iter sternerent et januas aperirent.*—Petr. Op. Bas. f. 1112.

touch his head*. His long study of the Fathers acquired for him, with the monks, the reputation of a profound theologian†. Kings and Emperors hastened to confer diplomas and titles on him, and invited him to their courts: even the Pope asked his advice on political measures‡; whilst governments contended which should employ him on embassies—and although he often professes to despise that eloquence which aims at inspiring others with the persuasion we ourselves do not entertain, he knew that he possessed it, and occasionally employed it in his capacity of an ambassador.

IV. "THAT Petrarch, in his political career, never ceased to be a *troubadour*—that all the tyrants of Italy, by flattering his vanity, obtained from him, in return, a base adulation—that he sometimes committed actions contrary to his principles, and to his duty as a citizen of Florence, and as a Guelph§"—are the statements of a modern historian, whose devotion to liberty sometimes encroaches on his reverence

* Senil. Lib. 15. Ep. 7.
† Epist. ad Post.
‡ Famil. Lib. 2. Ep. 16, 17.
§ SISMONDI Hist. des Rep. Ital. vol. v. p. 300.

for truth. Petrarch was born an exile; his father was buried in a foreign land, proscribed by the Guelphs; nor did their sons restore to Petrarch his right of citizenship until he was near fifty years old; nor his confiscated patrimony*, until after the plague had laid waste Florence, when for the purpose of attracting a greater number of foreigners, they intended to establish an University there under his direction†. He loaded them with thanks and praises, in a long letter which he wrote from Padua, and returned immediately to Vaucluse. His hereditary attachment to the party of the Ghibelines inspired him with more respect for the military dictators of the towns of Lombardy. The veneration which they pretended to entertain for Petrarch, and perhaps also the terror of their bloody vengeance, tempted him to give flattery for flattery. They spontaneously procured for him ecclesiastical benefices in their dominions, and sought his opinion upon political subjects. He did not consider himself unequal to afford them advice; but his

* *Plura advenæ præstitit Aretium, quam Florentia civi suo.* —Senil. Lib. 13, Ep. 2.

† Mehus, Vita Ambr. Camald. p. 223.—Matteo Villani, Stor. Fiorent. Lib. 10.

soul could not rest steadily on its centre; it was impelled, by any sudden impulse, from one extreme to the other; and he would fly, as the abysses of infamy and danger, the very palaces where he had just before hoped to revive justice. Whenever there appeared the least opportunity or chance of re-establishing in Rome the seat of the Western Empire, he made the interests of all princes secondary to this illusive scheme, which he cherished to his latest breath. It is when he writes to his friends, to the Popes and Cardinals, to the Emperors, and to the Italian people, upon this subject, that Petrarch displays the magnanimity of a noble soul, and the finest specimens of a genius which, though turned to poetry by love, seems to have been more particularly designed by Nature to form a powerful orator.

V. His three political canzoni, exquisite as they are in versification and style, do not breathe that enthusiasm which opened to Pindar's grasp all the wealth of imagination, all the treasures of historic lore and moral truth, to illustrate and dignify his strain. Yet the vigour, the arrangement, and perspicuity of the ideas in these canzoni of Petrarch—the

tone of conviction and melancholy in which the patriot upbraids, and mourns over his country, strike the heart with such force, as to atone for the absence of grand and exuberant imagery, and of the irresistible impetus which peculiarly belongs to the ode. The exhaustion consequent upon long and still continued civil feuds began to precipitate Italy into that state of inaction and dependance from which she has never since risen—

Che s'aspetti non so, nè che s'agogni,
Italia, che suoi guai non par che senta;
Vecchia, oziosa, e lenta
Dormirà sempre, e non fia chi la svegli?
Le mani le avess' io dentro a' capegli!

What Italy expects, or what desires,
I know not, she that feels not her own woe;
Indolent, in old age, and slow
Still will she sleep? none break her trance profound?
Oh, would that in her locks my wakening hands were round!
MILMAN's Transl.

"I see no salvation but in the union of those few lofty spirits who love their country,"

Fra' magnanimi pochi a chi'l ben piace
Io vo gridando Pace, pace, pace!—

But in vain. The animosities of a divided nation can be subdued by a conqueror only; whose conquest, however, can only be preserved by keeping them alive. The unfor-

tunate issue of his councils did not discourage Petrarch from repeating them, in every way, and he sometimes blended flattery with them for the purpose of tempering the harshness of his truths. Still, if he had not been protected by his great popularity, Petrarch would certainly have incurred the danger which hangs over unarmed prophets. He was never stoned, but was sometimes derided. The Doge Andrea Dandolo, the earliest historian, and the most ambitious warrior of Venice, and at the same time one of the most devoted admirers of Petrarch, wrote to him—"My friend, explain to us how it is, that a man, to whom God has given the eloquence and the wisdom to instruct others to do well, is always changing his place of residence? That must be injurious to your studies. We thank you for exhorting us to make peace with the Genoese; but we must fight. If our answer to your elaborate letter appear short, attribute it to the circumstances of the time, which require of us deeds, and not words*."

VI. PETRARCH's hatred of the French, whom he called "enervated madmen," and of the Germans, whom he considered as "brutal

* Variarum, Epist. 5.

knaves*," was exasperated when the troops, who, under Edward III. of England, had spread such desolation through France, hired themselves out to the Italian States. From that time he never ceased to preach a crusade against all foreigners—"Valour shall take up arms against brute force—and be the contest brief—for the bravery of their forefathers is not yet dead in Italian hearts"—

Virtù contra furore
Prenderà l'arme; e fia'l combatter corto:
Chè l'antico valore
Ne gl'Italici cor non è ancor morto.

The hope of preventing the princes of Italy from persisting in their mutual slaughter and ravages, inspired Petrarch with the canzone—

Italia mia! benchè'l parlar sia indarno,
A le piaghe mortali
Che nel bel corpo tuo sì spesse veggio—

Ben provide Natura al nostro stato,
Quando de l'Alpi schermo
Posè fra noi, e la Tedesca rabbia.

Oh, mine own Italy! though vain 'twill be
To speak of all those mortal wounds
That on thy lovely form too-frequent still I see—

Well did all-provident Nature fence our land;
The bulwark of the Alps she bade
Between us and the raging German stand.

MILMAN'S Transl.

* Epist. sine titulo 15.

All subsequent poets of Italy have considered it their bounden duty to oppose lamentings and imprecations to the march of arrayed armies. But when Petrarch warned Italy of her ruin, it was not too late to avert it. Her princes were only beginning to invite as allies those foreigners who remained their masters—

Voi, cui Fortuna ha posto in mano il freno
Delle belle contrade,
Di che nulla pietà par che vi stringa,
Che fan qui tante pellegrine spade?
Perchè 'l verde terreno
Del barbarico sangue si dipinga?
Vano error vi lusinga;
Poco vedete, e parvi veder molto;
Che 'n cor venale amor cercate, o fede:
Qual più gente possiede,
Colui è più da' suoi nemici avvolto.
O diluvio raccolto
Di che deserti strani
Per inondare i nostri dolci campi!
Se dalle proprie mani
Questo n'avvien, or chi fia che ne scampi?

Ye, to whose hands now Fortune yields
The reins, which sway these beauteous fields,
Can all our wrongs no pity then inspire?
Still must the stranger pour his armed flood
On this fair soil? How vain your fell desire
To shield your country with barbarian blood!
Blind error leads your way:

Wise in your own conceits, who think to find
True faith or honour in a venal mind!
He, whom barbarian crowds defend,
Feeds but a traitor in each friend.
Alas, what savage wilds, what rugged shores
Vomit their famish'd tribes upon thy plains,
Oh, Italy! to fix thy chains!
Hark, how the deluge roars!
How shall her sons avert the deadly blow,
When e'en our voice invites the distant foe?

VII. To his regret that he had not been born in an earlier age, we owe his incessant study of the ancients—"among whom he was resolved to live at least in his mind, in order that he might the more effectually detach himself from his contemporary generation*." Several of his letters are addressed to Homer, to Cicero, to Varro, and other great characters of antiquity, as if they were still *living*†; and whenever he writes to Ludovico, to Francesco, or to Lello di Stefano, his most intimate friends, or when he speaks of them, he always calls them Socrates, Simonides, and Lelius. He would probably himself have adopted the

* *Incubui unicè ad notitiam vetustatis, quoniam mihi semper ætas ista displicuit, ut qualibet ætate natus esse semper optaverim; et hanc oblivisci nisus, animo me aliis semper inserere.*—Ad Post.

† Epistolæ ad Viros Illustres.

name of some illustrious ancient, if with his covetousness of the world's admiration, he had not also dreaded its ridicule. He contented himself with changing his father's name, Pietro, which was idiomatically pronounced *Petracco* and *Petraccolo*, into the sonorous one of Petrarcha. When Cola di Rienzo stirred up the people of Rome, and took the title of NICOLAS THE SEVERE AND THE CLEMENT, THE TRIBUNE OF LIBERTY, PEACE, AND JUSTICE, THE ILLUSTRIOUS LIBERATOR OF THE HOLY ROMAN REPUBLIC, and summoned kings to account for their conduct at his tribunal, Petrarch gave him his praise and his advice*. A few months afterwards, he suffered the mortification of hearing that his hero, after having murdered some of the nobles and starved the populace, had fled from Rome, like a coward and a traitor. Petrarch received this news when he was on his road to Italy, and the letter which he wrote on the occasion does more honour to his patriotism than to his wisdom—"The Tribune's letter came like a thunderbolt on me. On whichever side I turn me, I see reason to despair—Rome torn to pieces—Italy defaced—what will become of me in

* See, amongst others, a long letter to Rienzo, page 535 of the Bâle edition—and amongst his Latin verses, Eclog. 5.

this public calamity? Let others lend their wealth, their power, their advice—as for me, I can give only my tears*." Those who are of opinion that political sentiments ought to be sacrificed to personal gratitude, will find many occasions to condemn Petrarch; for whenever he could hope to make Rome the capital of the world, all the affections of his soul were absorbed in his enthusiasm for his country. He supported the enterprise, and loudly defended the conduct, of Cola di Rienzo, although a son and a grandson of Stefano Colonna had been slain by Rienzo's party. "The Colonnas," he writes, "are dearer to me than my life; but Rome is dearer to me still†."

VIII. His influence over the great is one of the most extraordinary and inexplicable traits of his character. The reason was, perhaps, that though his gratitude for benefits received was profoundly felt and loudly expressed, he never stooped to flatter, like men who look for new favours. Often, and while he was still without fortune or fame, he addressed severe

* Famil. Lib. 7. Ep. 5. ad Lelium.

† *Nulla toto orbe, familia carior: carior tamen Roma.*—Fam. Lib. 11. Ep. 16.

remonstrances and advice to his benefactors, persons who were venerable from their station and their years*. Whilst Petrarch enjoyed the countenance of the Visconti family, the most powerful and cruel despots in Italy, his conduct was rather that of an honest counsellor than of a courtier; and it was during his intercourse with Petrarch that Galeazzo founded the University of Pavia. Although we may perceive every moment that he is highly gratified in possessing illustrious friends, all the actions of his life attest what he himself asserts, "that if the great desired his society, they must accommodate themselves to his humour†"—yet if he seldom stooped to their political purposes, he always repaid their liberalities with a lasting affection. He received innumerable acts of kindness from the Princes of Coreggio: but they governed their subjects upon a ruinous system of policy; and Petrarch remained there some time, wavering between the contemplation of the honours he received, and the apprehension that they might not be gratuitously bestowed. He therefore retired, for the purpose of finishing his AFRICA, to a small house at Parma, in a quiet situation,

* Famil. Lib. 2. Ep. 5, 6, 7, et 8.

† Senil. Lib. 2. Ep. 2.

which he afterwards purchased*. Soon after, Azzo di Coreggio, having lost his estate, was reduced to live amidst the greatest calamities, sometimes in exile, at others a prisoner, and always in imminent danger; but he retained to the very last the friendship of Petrarch, who continued to write to him with greater respect than he used towards more fortunate princes; and it was for his consolation that he composed the treatise UPON THE REMEDIES FOR PROSPERITY AND ADVERSITY. Robert king of Naples had requested that the AFRICA might be dedicated to him: he died soon afterwards, and though many other princes aspired to this distinction, it was found after Petrarch's death dedicated to the manes of Robert.

IX. AFTER a considerable lapse of time, Petrarch acquired, through his reputation alone, the friendship of James of Carrara, the younger. —"Indeed," says Petrarch, "I do not know, that among the princes of his time, there existed his equal. I would undertake to affirm, that there did not. He has persevered for so many years together in soliciting my friendship, by dispatching couriers to me, both when I resided beyond the Alps, and, whilst I

* Epist. ad Poster.

remained in Italy, and in short, wherever I was to be found, that although I expect but little from the great ones of the earth, I nevertheless formed the resolution of paying him a visit. I felt anxious to discover the meaning of such advances, from a man of his powerful influence, towards an individual with whom he had no personal acquaintance. This was my reason for repairing to Padua. I was received by that great man, who has left so many splendid memorials behind him, in a manner more accordant with our ideas of the admission of the blessed into Paradise, than the reception of a fellow-mortal. When he learnt that I had, from my youth, dedicated myself to the Church, he caused me to be elected Canon of Padua, with a view of conciliating my attachment to his person and country. And, indeed, had not death deprived me of his protection, I might, in that tranquil retirement, have found the termination of all my earthly troubles. But, alas! nothing is certain here below! And the moment when we think ourselves most secure from the frowns of fortune, may be that which is pregnant with her severest afflictions. I had not resided quite two years at Padua, when the Almighty, in summoning my patron to his presence, de-

prived me, his country, and, I may add, the whole world, of a benefactor, of whom neither myself, nor his country, nor, indeed, the whole world, were worthy. In this one sentiment, I feel, at least, that I cannot be mistaken. He was succeeded by his son, a prince of considerable prudence, and who was greatly beloved by his subjects. Inheriting the great endowments of his father, he continued to honour me with equal favour and regard. But one essential quality of friendship was wanting between us—I mean a similarity of age. After the severe loss I had thus sustained, I returned again to France, doubtful where I could next establish myself *."

X. NATURE had doomed Petrarch to such a necessity of interchanging affections, that he never seemed happy unless when loving or being loved. Affection, in his eyes, levelled the inequalities of education and fortune: and in spite of his yearning for solitude, he was *solus sibi; totus omnibus: omnium locorum, omnium horarum, omnium fortunarum, omnium mortalium homo.* He speaks in the same terms of the peasant and his wife who waited on him at Vaucluse, as he uses when recording the good qualities of his

* Epist. ad Post.

powerful friends—"He was my counsellor, and the keeper of all my most secret designs; and I should have lamented his loss still more grievously, had I not been warned by his advanced age, that I could not expect long to retain possession of such a companion. In him I have lost a confidential servant, or, rather, a father, in whose bosom I had deposited my sorrows for these fifteen years past; and his humble cottage was, to me, as a temple. He cultivated for me a few acres of indifferent land. He knew not how to read, yet he was also the guardian of my library. With anxious eye he watched over my most rare and ancient copies, which, by long use, he could distinguish from those that were more modern, or of which I myself was the author. Whenever I consigned a volume to his custody, he was transported with joy; he pressed it to his bosom with sighs; with great reverence he repeated the author's name; and seemed as if he had received an accession of learning and happiness from the sight and touch of a book*. His wife's face was scorched by the sun, and her body extenuated by labour; but she had a soul of the most candid and generous nature. Under the burning heat of the dog-star, in the

* Famil. Lib. 6. Ep. 1.

midst of snow and of rain, she was found from morning till evening in the fields, whilst even a greater part of the night was given to work than to repose. Her bed was of straw; her food was black bread, frequently full of sand; and her drink was water, mixed with vinegar: yet she never appeared weary or afflicted; never shewed any desire of a more easy life; nor was even heard to complain of the cruelty of destiny, and of mankind*."

XI. It was on account of his natural benevolence that Petrarch seemed free from that feeling by which almost all men of letters, if not during the whole, at least in some moments, of their lives, are inwardly humiliated. The mystical tradition of Apollo flaying his competitor, is related by a Greek antiquary, with such praises of the musical skill of Marsyas, and with such imputations of trickery and cruelty on the God of Poetry†, that it was probably an allegory, not so much of the chastisement merited by presumptuous ignorance, as of the vindictive jealousy of scholars. The protestations, which Petrarch mingles with the confessions of his other failings, and which

* Famil. Lib. 3. Ep. 28.—Lib. 9. Ep. 2.
† Diodorus Sic. Lib. 3. Sect. 59.

he repeats in his old age—"that envy never dwelt in his heart*"—sprang from one of the countless illusions which bewilder us precisely when we fancy that our own heart can hide nothing from our penetration. Envy remained dormant because no one about Petrarch was pre-eminent enough to awaken it. He uttered rarely the name, and affected never to peruse the works, of Dante; and if he cannot always avoid speaking of his predecessor, it is to record less his excellencies than his faults†. The opposite paths by which nature, education, their times and the accidents of fortune, led these two men to immortality, will be traced out in the following Essay.—With respect to his contemporaries, Petrarch was so far above jealousy himself, that he often contrived to extinguish it among them. But whenever his interference was not attended with success, he lamented it as an undeserved misery, to which, however, he submitted, perhaps from the ambition of displaying his authority. To this trait of his character he seems to allude in some lines which undoubtedly were prompted by his own experience—

* De Secreto Confl. col. 2. an. 1343.—Senil. Lib. 13. Ep. 7. an. 1372.

† Rerum Memor. Lib. 3. c. 4.

La lunga vita, e la sua larga vena
D'ingegno, pose in accordar le parti
Che il furor letterato a guerra mena;
Ne'l poteo far: che come crebber l'arti
Crebbe l'invidia, e col sapere insieme
Ne' cuori enfiati i suoi veneni sparti.

Trionfa della Fama.

With anxious toil, he through his lengthened life
The copious flood of eloquence applied,
In vain! to quench of learned bands the strife:
For with the growth of arts grew envious pride.
Wisdom herself but fanned the raging pest
And urged its venom o'er the inflated breast.

Although his vanity was gratified at the expence of his peace, his mediation in the literary quarrels was grounded on the generous principle—"that they who burn with the love of their country, being essentially virtuous, are formed by nature for indissoluble friendship*." But lofty maxims, when proclaimed amongst people with whom they are impracticable, inevitably provoke ridicule; and Petrarch by reproving those who laughed at his advice, in some measure justified the jests against him. A literary club of young men at Venice brought him to a formal trial, for having

* *Inter bonos amor communis patriæ potens valde est, sicut inter malos odium.*—Senil. Lib. 15. Ep. 6.

usurped and exercised an illegal jurisdiction over all questions of learning. They appointed from their own body judges and counsel; and after hearing the pleadings for the prosecution and the defence, they decided that Petrarch's crime consisted only in being a good sort of man. Of this farce no one, save Petrarch himself, took any serious notice. To repel the insinuation he composed a large book, which has actually forced posterity to join in the merriment of his accusers*.

XII. THINKING that mankind conspired not so much against him, as against wisdom and virtue, his character acquired a tint of misanthropy by no means natural to him. All those who approached him nearly, perceived that he had more of fear than hatred, more of pity than contempt, for man. Indeed the propensity to be useful to others, although too loudly professed, was born with him; and instead of being abated by the selfishness of old age, it grew into an anxiety which ceased only with his life. When one of his friends was persecuted, he wrote to him: "Take your choice;

* *De sua ips. et al. ignorantia.*

either come and find an asylum under my roof, or you will compel me to come into France for your protection*." The lessons of early adversity, which harden selfish dispositions, had taught the generous heart of Petrarch to feel for the sufferings of others; and shunning —like all men, who are merely busied with their own feelings and intellectual faculties— "the exertion necessary for the acquirement and preservation of riches†," he was led in the fearlessness of youth to spend for the benefit of others, nearly all of the scanty inheritance he derived from parents who died in exile. He bestowed one part as a dowry on his sister, who married at Florence‡, and gave up the other to two deserving friends, who were in indigent circumstances§. He lent even some classic manuscripts, which he called his only treasures, to his old master, that he might pawn them: in this manner Cicero's books DE GLORIA were

* Famil. Lib. 12. Ep. 9.

† *Non quod divitias non optarem, sed labores curasque oderam, opum comites inseparabiles.*—Ep. ad Post.

‡ LEONARDO ARETINO, Vit. Petr.—From a document lately discovered at Florence it appears, that the dowry of Petrarch's sister consisted of 35 florins in gold.

§ *Hujus hæreditatis duas partes—inter duos veteres, et benemeritos amicos partitus sum.*—Famil. Lib. 15. Ep. 5.

irrecoverably lost*. If his presents were declined, he attached some verses to them which compelled his friends to accept them; and he distributed his Italian poetry as alms amongst rhymesters and ballad-singers†. As he advanced in years, the "sovereign contempt for riches," which he continued to profess‡, was more apparent than real, especially towards the end of his career§: yet he never forgot those who looked to him for aid, which he always bestowed with kindness. Among the many legacies of his testament he left to one of his friends his lute, that he might sing the praises of the Almighty—to a domestic, a sum of money, intreating him not to lose it at play as usual—to his amanuensis, a silver goblet, recommending him to fill it with water in preference to wine—and to Boccacio a winter pelisse, for his nocturnal studies. Nor did he wait till death had compelled him to be liberal—"In good truth," he writes to Boccacio, "I know not what you mean by answering, that you are my debtor in money. Oh! if

* Senil. Lib. 16. Ep. 1.

† Senil. Lib. 5. Ep. 3.

‡ DIVITIARUM CONTEMPTOR EXIMIUS.—Epist. ad Post.—Senil. Lib. 3. Ep. 2.

§ Variarum, Ep. 43. an. 1371.

I were able to enrich you!—but for two friends like ourselves, who possess but one soul, one house is sufficient*."

XIII. These offers arose also from the loneliness in which Petrarch often passed his days. To be the parent of illegitimate children, chilled the domestic charities which alone could offer consolation to his ardent heart. His son, either from the perverseness of his disposition, or from the father's excessive anxiety about his future eminence, was a source of tribulation and shame†; and he never mentions him by any other name than—*the youth*,—so that had it not been for De Sade's recent discovery of a bull of Clement VI. legitimating him, nobody, not even Tiraboschi, could have guessed that he was Petrarch's son‡. He was appointed a Canon at Verona, and when he died his father recorded the event, in the same copy of Virgil wherein he had inserted the memorandum of Laura's death—"He, who was born for my vexation and sorrow, who while he lived was the cause of grievous and endless cares to me,

* Senil. Lib. 7. Ep. 5.

† *Unicus vitæ labor, unicus dolor, unicus pudor est.*—Famil. Lib. 23. Ep. 12.

‡ Regist. Clem. VI. vol. 45, page 200.

and whose death opened a wound in my heart, after having enjoyed a few days of happiness, departed in the twenty-fifth year of his age*." —The older he grew, the more desolate he felt, and the more he longed for "that youth" whom he professed to hate when alive—but on whom his thoughts now dwelt with fondness; his heart cherished; his memory continually set before him; and his eyes sought every where†. Petrarch had less reserve in speaking of his daughter, whom he loved the more because she resembled him in features and disposition: yet it would seem, that she never set her foot in his house until she was married—and in his will, he only makes the following indirect allusion to her—"I beg Francesco di Brossano" (this was his daughter's husband) "not only as my heir, but as my very dear son, to divide whatever money he may find after my death into two portions; *one* he will reserve for himself—and *the other* he will bestow upon the person whom he knoweth‡."

* *Homo natus ad laborem, ad dolorem meum, et vivens gravibus me curis exercuit, et acri dolore moriens vulneravit, qui cum paucos lætos dies vidisset in vita sua, obiit An. D'ni* 1361, *æt. suæ* XXV.

† *Quem viventem verbo oderam, defunctum mente diligo, corde teneo complectorquè memoria, quæro oculis.*—Senil. Lib. 1. Ep. 2.

‡ *Et ipsum rogo non solum ut hæredem, sed ut filium carissi-*

XIV. While he longed to have somebody always near him who might love him, yet, was he often condemned to live quite alone, by the fear that a too frequent intercourse with the persons dearest to him would furnish him with reason for distrusting them. It was by opening his heart and his purse more frequently than his doors, that he boasts, and with reason, "that no man was more devoted to his friends, and that he never lost one*." Even in his early youth, when the heart is more confiding, and he really wished to live with them, he was always afraid of discovering their defects. —"Nothing," says he, "is so tiresome as to converse with a person who has not the same information as one's self†." But the moment that he felt disposed to give himself to society, he conversed with the utmost freedom. "If I seem to my friends," says he, "to be a great talker, it is because I see them seldom, and then I talk as much in a day as will compensate for the silence of a year. In the judgment of many of them, I express myself clearly and strongly; but in my own opinion, my language is feeble and obscure, for I never could impose

mum, ut pecuniam dividat in duas partes; et unam sibi habeat, alteram numeret cui scit me velle.—Testam. Petr.

* Epist. ad Post.

† Famil. Lib. 10. Ep. 15 et 16.

upon myself the task of being eloquent in conversation. I have never liked dinners, and have always considered it as troublesome as it is useless, to invite, or be invited, to them; but nothing gives me more pleasure than any one dropping in on me at my meals, and I never eat alone if I can help it*." To the very end of his life, Petrarch cherished his habits of strict temperance, to which he had been accustomed from his very infancy: he seldom ate more than one meal a day; he disliked wine, lived chiefly upon vegetables, and often, during seasons of devotion and on fasting-days, bread and water constituted the whole of his dinner. As his fortune increased, he augmented the number of his servants and transcribers; these he always took with him on his journeys, and kept more horses to carry his books. Twelve years before his death, he gave his rich collection of ancient manuscripts to the Venetian Senate, and thus became the founder of the library of Saint Marc. He requested, and received, by way of remuneration, a mansion in Venice. The only fault which he contracted from the possession of wealth was the custom of boasting too much about the good use he made of it.

* Epist. ad Post.

XV. Possessing a house in almost every country where he had an ecclesiastical benefice, Petrarch lived as if he had no home, and was ever regretting his hermitage of Vaucluse. He had resided there, with few interruptions, ten years during Laura's life-time, and he often returned there after her death—"I had resolved to return here no more, but my desires overcame my resolution; and in justification of my inconstancy, I have nothing to allege but the necessity which I feel for solitude. In my own country I am too well known, too much courted, too greatly praised. I am sick of adulation; and that place becomes dear to me, where I can live to myself alone, abstracted from the crowd, and unannoyed by the trumpet of Fame. Habit, which is second nature, has rendered Vaucluse my true country*." The last time he resided at it two years—"I am again in France, not to see what I have already seen a thousand times, but to dissipate weariness and disquietude, as invalids seek to do, by change of place†.—Thus I have no place to remain in, none to go to: I am weary of

* Famil. Lib. 2. Ep. 12.

† *Stare nescius, non tam desiderio visa millies revisendi, quam studio more ægrorum, loci mutatione, tædii consulendi.*—Epist. ad Post.

life; and whatever path I take, I find it strewed with flints and thorns. In good truth, the spot which I seek has no existence upon earth: would that the time were come, when I might depart in search of a world far different from this wherein I feel so unhappy—unhappy, perhaps, from my own fault; perhaps from that of mankind; or it may be only the fault of the age in which I am destined to live; or it may be the fault of no one—still I am unhappy*." —On every suspicion of troubles, of war, or of epidemical disease, he endeavours to justify his change of abode.—"It is not to avoid death that I thus wander on the earth, but to seek if there be any corner in which tranquillity may be found†." From his aversion to medicine, which he derides with less apathy than Montaigne, and with less humour than Moliere, but with more vehemence and a fuller conviction than either of them‡, it is plain that he had no pusillanimous attachment to life. But whilst he complained that he could not die in peace because men ran after him, he ought to have known that the often leaving a

* Famil. Lib. 15. Ep. 8.—Lib. 17. Ep. 3.

† *Non ut mortem fugiam, sed ut quæram, si qua in terris est, requiem.*—Senil. Lib. 1. Ep. 6.

‡ Invectivæ in Medicum.—Senil. Lib. 12. Ep. 1 et 2.

country and often returning to it, was not the best means of silencing curiosity; and that an author may hope to remain unmolested, only when he says nothing of others, and very little of himself—

> Cercato ho sempre solitaria vita,
> Le rive il sanno e le campagne e i boschi:
> Per fuggir quest' ingegni sordi e loschi,
> Che la strada del Cielo hanno smarrita.
>
> I ever sought a life of solitude,
> This know the shores, and every lawn and wood;
> To fly from those deaf spirits and blind away,
> Who from the path of Heaven have gone astray.
>
> MILMAN'S Transl.

On comparing the actual condition of mankind with the perfection for which he sighed, he became more wrapped in the contemplation of himself, and considered them unworthy of his study, but not of his censure: and whilst he aspired to heaven, he was not indifferent to this world. He must still have attached some importance to the human race; for, had he been capable of really despising it, he would not have experienced that constant necessity to fly from men; to immure himself in solitude; to complain of the folly and ignorance of society, and of the ties by which nature has bound us all to life amongst the foolish,

the wise, the virtuous, the wicked, the tyrants, and the slaves; and all equally wretched. He says that Laura on her death-bed heard a voice reminding her of the discontented and wandering life of her lover—

O misero colui che i giorni conta
E pargli l'un mill'anni, e indarno vive,
E seco in terra mai non si raffronta—
E cerca il mar e tutte le sue rive.

When, in sad accents, tremulous and slow
This mournful chant beside me seem'd to flow
"Unhappy he, whose hours, in tardy train,
Seem each a day of long-protracted pain!
One vision haunts him through the tedious way,
By land and sea, to lasting woes a prey." BOYD'S Tr.

Petrarch had made the same complaint in his SECRET WORK, written about twenty years before these lines—"I have sought liberty every where; in the west, in the south, in the north, in the confines of the ocean; but I have found it no where—for I have travelled always with myself*."

XVI. WHEREVER he went, he took up his abode in a sort of hermitage, and continued to compose whole volumes, still exclaiming that he was only losing his time, but that he must

* De Secret. Confl. coll. 3.

do something to forget himself—"Whether I am being shaved or having my hair cut, whether I am riding on horseback or taking my meals, I either read myself, or get some one to read to me. On the table where I dine, and by the side of my bed, I have all the materials for writing; and, when I awake in the dark, I write, although I am unable to read the next morning what I have written*." During the latter years of his life he always slept with a lighted lamp near him, and rose exactly at midnight†.—"Like a wearied traveller, I quicken my pace in proportion as I approach the end of my journey. I read and write night and day: it is my only resource. My eyes are heavy with watching, my hand is wearied with writing, and my heart is worn with care. I desire to be known to posterity; if I cannot succeed, I may be known to my own age, or at least to my friends. It would have satisfied me to have known myself; but in that I shall never succeed‡."—What does a life, thus spent, avail? To what purpose are so many watchful nights and weary days—so

* This passage belongs to the fourteenth letter of Petrarch, of a series which is still inedited. The manuscript exists in the library of St. Marc, at Venice.

† Famil. Ep. 72.

‡ Famil. Lib. 10. Ep. 15.

many specimens of a noble genius, and of a benevolent heart? In the Letter which Petrarch addressed, a few months before his death, to Posterity, as his last legacy, and as the ultimate result of his long studies, he declares, that he never found a philosophical system which was satisfactory to him; and scarcely an historical fact, on the truth of which he could depend; and thus concludes: "To philosophise is to love wisdom; and true wisdom is Jesus Christ."

XVII. By this strong sense of religion, all his passions were kept in a constant struggle, and, gaining force from action, it served only to irritate them, and to disturb the faculties of his mind, which were vehement rather than vigorous. The most ordinary actions, the most indifferent occurrences, were sufficient to fix him in a train of meditation upon eternity. Having, when yet in his youth, felt himself exhausted, and out of breath, before he could reach the top of a mountain, which he was attempting to climb, he wrote to a friend—"I compared the state of my soul, which desires to gain Heaven, but walks not in the way to it, to that of my body, which had so many difficulties in attaining the top of the mountain,

notwithstanding the curiosity which prompted me to attempt it. These reflections inspired me with more strength and courage. If, said I, I have undergone so much labour and fatigue, that my body may be nearer to Heaven, what ought I not to do, and suffer, that my soul also may arrive there*?"—The death of Laura, and of many friends of his youth, particularly all the Colonnas, of whom the Cardinal died of a broken heart—the shameful defeat of Cola di Rienzo—the civil wars in Italy—the consummate height of corruption in the Church—the plague, which desolated the south of Europe—and the invasion of Naples by the Hungarians—all concurred, in the course of the same year, to overwhelm him with affliction, in the vigour of his manhood†. In a letter, written at that period, he exclaims: "What! Can it be true, as so many philosophers have conjectured, that the Deity concerns not himself with the affairs of mortals? Yes, Great Creator! thou dost take thought for man; but how unsearchable are thy dispensations! for what purpose are human calamities? In vain would a finite intellect investigate their causes. Yet these calamities are extreme; I

* Famil. Lib. 4. Ep. 1.

† Famil. Lib. 8. Ep. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

see them, I suffer them: I know that I have already lived two years too long*."

XVIII. HENCE, from reflecting upon the mournful events which so closely preceded and followed the loss of the woman from whom alone he had long expected his happiness, his hopes were wholly turned to a future existence. Pursuing a plan of wisdom, which was unsuited to his restless mind, he conceived—"That, to cure all his miseries, he must study them night and day—that to accomplish this project effectually, he must renounce all other desires—and that the only means of arriving at a total forgetfulness of life, was to reflect perpetually on death†." The power of executing his resolutions was not equal to his ardour in planning them, and his faculties were exhausted by conflicting impulses. After he had accustomed himself to look on death without dread, it again appeared to him under fearful forms. He was seized with sudden lethargies, which rendered him absolutely insensible; and for the space of thirty hours, his body appeared like a corpse‡.

* Famil. Lib. 8. Ep. 7.—an. 1349.

† De Secret. Confl. coll. 1.

‡ Senil. Lib. 3. Ep. 7.—Lib. 9. Ep. 2.—Lib. 13. Ep. 9.—Lib. 15. Ep. 14.—Lib. 11. Ep. ult.

When he revived, he testified, that he had experienced neither terror nor pain. But, by his intemperate meditation on eternity as a christian and as a philosopher, he provoked Nature to withhold the boon, which she had designed for him, of dying in peace. "I lay myself in my bed as in my shroud—suddenly I start up in a frenzy—I speak to myself—I dissolve in tears, so as to make those weep who witness my condition *."—Whatever he saw or heard in these paroxysms of grief, made him experience "the torments of hell." By degrees he found delight in nourishing his sorrows, and resigned himself during the rest of his life to those reveries which beset ardent minds, and make them ever regret the past, and ever repent; ever grow weary of the present, and either hope or fear too much from the future. Four years before his death, Petrarch built a new house at Arqua, near Padua; and on the twentieth day of July, 1374, the eve of the seventieth anniversary of his birth, he was found dead in his library, with his head resting on a book.

* De Secret. Confl. coll. 2.

A PARALLEL

BETWEEN

DANTE AND PETRARCH.

A PARALLEL

BETWEEN

DANTE AND PETRARCH.

L'UN DISPOSTO A PATIRE E L'ALTRO A FARE.
DANTE, PURG. C. XXV.

I. THE excess of erudition in the age of Leo the Tenth, carried the refinements of criticism so far as even to prefer elegance of taste to boldness of genius. The laws of the Italian language were thus deduced, and the models of poetry selected exclusively from the works of Petrarch; who being then proclaimed superior to Dante, the sentence remained, until our times, unreversed. Petrarch himself mingles Dante indiscriminately with others eclipsed by his own fame—

Ma ben ti prego, che in la terza spera,
Guitton saluti, e Messer Cino, e Dante,
Franceschin nostro, e tutta quella shiera.

Così or quinci, or quindi rimirando
Vidi in una fiorita e verde piaggia
Gente che d' Amor givan ragionando.

Ecco Dante, e Beatrice: ecco Selvaggia,
Ecco Cin da Pistoja; Guitton d' Arezzo;
Ecco i due Guidi che già furo in prezzo;
Onesto Bolognese, e i Siciliani.— Trionf. c. 4.

Salute, I pray thee, in the sphere of love,
Guitton, my master Cino, Dante too,
Our Franceschin, all that blest band above.——

Thus while my gazing eyes around me rove,
I saw upon a slope of flowery green
Many that held their sweet discourse of love:
Here Dante and his Beatrice, there were seen
Selvaggia and Cino of Pistoia; there
Guitton the Aretine; and the high-priz'd pair,
The Guidi; and Onesto these among,
And all the masters of Sicilian song. MILMAN.

Boccacio, discouraged by the reputation of these two great masters, determined to burn his own poetry. Petrarch diverted him from this purpose, writing with a tone of humility somewhat inconsistent with the character of a man who was not naturally a hypocrite. "You are a philosopher and a christian," says he, "and yet you are discontented with yourself for not being an illustrious poet! Since *another* has occupied the *first* place, be satisfied

with the *second*, and I will take the *third**."—Boccacio, perceiving the irony and the allusion, sent Dante's poem to Petrarch, and intreated that "he would not disdain to read the work of a great man, from whom exile and death, while he was still in the vigour of life, had snatched the laurel†."—"Read it, I conjure you; your genius reaches to the heavens, and your glory extends beyond the earth: but reflect that Dante is our fellow-citizen; that he has shewn all the force of our language; that his life was unfortunate; that he undertook and suffered every thing for glory; and that he is still pursued by calumny, and by envy, in the grave. If you praise him, you will do honour to him—you will do honour to yourself—you will do honour to Italy, of which you are the greatest glory and the only hope."

II. PETRARCH, in his answer, is angry "that he can be considered jealous of the celebrity of a poet "whose language is coarse, though his conceptions are lofty"—"You must hold him

* Senil. Lib. 5. Ep. 2. et 3.

† Nec tibi sit durum versus vidisse poetæ
Exsulis.—— ——

in veneration and in gratitude, as the first light of your education, whilst I never saw him but once, at a distance, or rather he was pointed out to me, while I was still in my childhood. He was exiled on the same day with my father, who submitted to his misfortunes, and devoted himself solely to the care of his children. The other, on the contrary, resisted, followed the path which he had chosen, thought only of glory, and neglected every thing else. If he were still alive, and if his character were as congenial to mine as his genius is, he would not have a better friend than me*."—This letter lengthened out by contradictions, ambiguities, and indirect apologies, points out the individual by circumlocutions, as if the name was withheld through caution or through awe. Some maintain that Dante is not referred to†; but the authentic list‡ still existing, of the Florentines banished on the 27th of January 1302, contains the names of Dante and the father of Petrarch, and that of no other individual to whom it is possible to apply

* Petr. Epist. edit. Ginevr. an. 1601. p. 445.

† Tiraboschi, Storia della Let. Ital. vol. 9. lib. 3. cap. 2. sect. 10.

‡ Muratori, Script. Rer. Ital. vol. 10. p. 501.

any one of the circumstances mentioned in the letter, whilst each, and the whole of them, apply strictly to Dante.

III. THESE two founders of Italian literature, were gifted with a very different genius, pursued different plans, established two different languages and schools of poetry, and have exercised till the present time a very different influence. Instead of selecting, as Petrarch does, the most elegant and melodious words and phrases, Dante often creates a new language, and summons all the various dialects of Italy to furnish him with combinations that might represent, not only the sublime and beautiful, but even the commonest scenes of nature; all the wild conceptions of his fancy; the most abstract theories of philosophy, and the most abstruse mysteries of religion. A simple idea, a vulgar idiom, takes a different colour and a different spirit from their pen. The conflict of opposite purposes *thrills in the heart* of Petrarch, and *battles in the brain* of Dante—

> Nè sì nè no nel cor dentro mi suona.—PETR.
> Che sì e no nel capo mi tenzona.—DANTE.
> At war 'twixt will and will not.—SHAKSPEARE.

Tasso expressed it with that dignity from which he never departs—

In gran tempesta di pensieri ondeggia.

Yet not only does this betray an imitation of the *magno curarum fluctuat æstu* of Virgil; but Tasso, by dreading the energy of the idiom *sì e no*, lost, as he does too often, the graceful effect produced by ennobling a vulgar phrase—an artifice which, however, in the pastoral of Aminta he has most successfully employed. His notion of epic style was so refined, that while he regarded Dante "as the greatest poet of Italy," he often asserted, "had he not sacrificed dignity and elegance, he would have been the first of the world."—No doubt Dante sometimes sacrificed even decorum and perspicuity; but it was always to impart more fidelity to his pictures, or more depth to his reflections. He says to himself—

Parla, e sie breve e arguto.—
Speak; and be brief, be subtile in thy words.

He says to his reader—

Or ti riman, lettor, sovra 'l tuo banco,
Dietro pensando a ciò, che si preliba,
S' esser vuoi lièto assai prima, che stanco.
Messo t' ho innanzi; omai per te ti ciba.

Now rest thee, reader, on thy bench, and muse
Anticipative of the feast to come;
So shall delight make thee not feel thy toil.
Lo! I have set before thee; for thyself
Feed now. CARY'S Transl.

IV. As to their versification, Petrarch attained the main object of erotic poetry; which is, to produce a constant musical flow in strains inspired by the sweetest of human passions. Dante's harmony is less melodious, but is frequently the result of more powerful art—

S' i' avessi le rime e aspre e chiocce,
Come si converebbe al tristo buco,
Sovra 'l qual pontan tutte l'altre rocce,
I' premerei di mio concetto il suco
Più pienamente: ma perch' i' non l'abbo,
Non senza tema a dicer mi conduco:
Che non è impresa da pigliare a gabbo,
Descriver fondo a tutto l'universo,
Nè da lingua, che chiami mammā o babbo.
Ma quelle donne ajutino 'l mio verso,
Ch' ajutaro Anfione a chiuder Tebe,
Sì che dal fatto il dir non sia diverso.

Oh! had I rough hoarse thunder in my verse,
To match this gulph of woe on all sides round
O'erbrow'd by rocks, then dreadfully should roar
The mighty torrent of my song: such powers
I boast not; but with shuddering awe attempt
The solemn theme. The world's extremest depth

Requires no infant babbling, but the choir
Of tuneful virgins to assist my strain,
By whose symphonious aid Amphion raised
The Theban walls,—but truth shall guide my tongue.
N. HOWARD'S Transl.

Here the poet evidently hints that to give colour and strength to ideas by the sound of words, is one of the necessary requisites of the art. The six first lines are made rough by a succession of consonants. But when he describes a quite different subject, the words are more flowing with vowels—

O anime affannate,
Venite a noi parlar, s'altri nol niega.
Quali colombe dal desio chiamate,
Con l' ali aperte e ferme al dolce nido,
Volan per l'aer dal voler portate.

" O wearied spirits! come, and hold discourse
With us, if by none else restrain'd." As doves
By fond desire invited, on wide wings
And firm, to their sweet nest returning home,
Cleave the air, wafted by their will along.
CARY'S Transl.

This translator frequently contravenes the position of his author, who, chiefly depending upon the effect of his versification, says, that " nothing harmonized by musical enchainment, can be transmuted from one tongue into another,

without destroying all its sweetness and harmony*."—The plan of Dante's poem required that he should pass from picture to picture, from passion to passion. He varies the tone in the different scenes of his journey as rapidly as the crowd of spectres flitted before his eyes; and he adapts the syllables and the cadences of each line, in such an artful manner as to give energy, by the change of his numbers, to those images which he intended to represent. For in the most harmonious lines, there is no poetry, whenever they fail to excite that glow of rapture, that exquisite thrill of delight, which arises from the easy and simultaneous agitation of all our faculties—this the poet achieves by powerful use of imagery.

V. IMAGES in poetry work upon the mind according to the process of nature herself;—first, they gain upon our senses—then, touch the heart—afterwards strike our imagination—and ultimately they imprint themselves upon our memory, and call forth the exertion of our reason, which consists mainly in the examination and comparison of our sensations. This process, indeed, goes on so rapidly as to be hardly perceived; yet all the gradations of it

* DANTE, Convito.

are visible to those who have the power of reflecting upon the operations of their own minds. Thoughts are in themselves only the raw material: they assume one form or another; they receive more or less brilliancy and warmth, more or less novelty and richness, according to the genius of the writer. It is by compressing them in an assemblage of melodious sounds, of warm feelings, of luminous metaphors, and of deep reasoning, that poets transform, into living and eloquent images, many ideas that lie dark and dumb in our mind; and it is by the magic presence of poetical images, that we are suddenly and at once taught to feel, to imagine, to reason, and to meditate, with all the gratification, and with none of the pain, which commonly attends every mental exertion. The notion, "that memory and the art of writing preserve all human knowledge"—the notion, "that hope forsakes not man even on the brink of the grave, and that the expectations of the dying man are still kept alive by the prospect of a life hereafter"—are truths most easy of comprehension, for they are forced upon us by every day's experience. Still the abstract terms in which every general maxim must inevitably be involved, are incapable of creat-

ing the simultaneous excitement by which all our faculties mutually aid each other: as when the poet addresses MEMORY—

> Ages and climes remote to thee impart
> What charms in Genius, and refines in Art;
> Thee, in whose hands the keys of Science dwell,
> The pensive portress of her holy cell;
> Whose constant vigils chase the chilling damp,
> Oblivion steals upon her vestal lamp—
>
> PLEASURES OF MEMORY.

with the metaphysical expressions of *Genius*, *Art*, *Science*, are interwoven objects proper to affect the senses, so that the reader sees the maxim set before him as in a picture.—By means of images only, poets can claim the merit of originality; for by the multiplied combination of very few notions, they produce novelty and form groupes, which, though differing in design and character, all exhibit the same truth. The following Italian passage on Memory has not the slightest resemblance to the English lines; yet the diversity lies only in the varied combination of images—"The Muses sit by the tomb, and when Time's icy wing sweeps away alike the marble, and the dust of man, with their song they cheer the desert waste, and harmony overcomes the silence of a thousand generations"—

Siedon le Muse su le tombe, e quando
Il Tempo con sue fredde ali vi spazza
I marmi e l'ossa, quelle Dee fan lieti
Di lor canto i deserti, e l'armonia
Vince di mille e mille anni il silenzio.

And what could be said of our expectations of immortality, which is not all contained and unfolded in this invocation to HOPE?

Thou, undismay'd, shalt o'er the ruin smile,
And light thy torch at Nature's funeral pile.
PLEASURES OF HOPE.

VI. PETRARCH'S images seem to be exquisitely finished by a very delicate pencil: they delight the eye rather by their colouring than by their forms. Those of Dante are the bold and prominent figures of an *alto-rilievo*, which, it seems, we might almost touch, and of which the imagination readily supplies those parts that are hidden from the view. The commonplace thought of the vanity of human renown is thus expressed by Petrarch—

O ciechi, il tanto affaticar che giova?
Tutti tornate alla gran madre antica,
E il vostro nome appena si ritrova.

O blind of intellect! of what avail
Are your long toils in this sublunar vale?

Tell, ye benighted souls! what gains accrue
From the sad task, which ceaseless ye pursue?
Ye soon must mingle with the dust ye tread;
And scarce your name upon a stone be read.

BOYD'S Transl.

and by Dante,

La vostra nominanza è color d'erba,
Che viene e va; e quei la discolora
Per cui vien fuori della terra acerba.

Your mortal fame is like the grass whose hue
Doth come and go; by the same sun decay'd,
From which it life, and health, and freshness drew.

MERIVALE.

The three lines of Petrarch have the great merit of being more spirited, and of conveying more readily the image of the earth swallowing up the bodies and names of all men; but those of Dante, in spite of their stern profundity, have the still greater merit of leading us on to ideas to which we should not ourselves have reached. Whilst he reminds us, that time, which is necessary for the consummation of all human glory, ultimately destroys it, the changing colour of grass presents the revolutions of ages, as the natural occurrence of a few moments. It is by mentioning "the great periods of time" that an old English

poet has lessened this very idea which he intended to magnify—

I know that all beneath the moon decays;
And what by mortals in this world is brought,
In time's great periods shall return to nought.
I know that all the muse's heavenly lays,
With toil of sprite which are so dearly bought,
As idle sounds, of few or none are sought,
That there is nothing lighter than mere praise.
DRUMMOND of Hawthornden.

Again, instead of the agency of time, Dante employs the agency of the sun; because, conveying to us a less metaphysical idea, and being an object more palpable to the senses, it abounds with more glorious and evident images, and fills us with greater wonder and admiration. Its application is more logical also, since every notion which we have of time, consists in the measure of it, which is afforded by the periodical revolutions of the sun.

VII. WITH respect to the different pleasure these two poets afford, it has been already remarked, that Petrarch calls forth the sweetest sympathies, and awakens the deepest emotions, of the heart: and whether they be of a

sad, or of a lively cast, we eagerly wish for them, because, the more they agitate us, the more strongly they quicken our consciousness of existence. Still, as we are perpetually striving against pain, and hurried on in the constant pursuit of pleasure, our hearts would sink under their own agitations, were they abandoned by the dreams of imagination, with which we are providentially gifted to enlarge our stock of happiness, and to gild with bright illusions the sad realities of life. Great writers alone can so control the imagination, as to make it incapable of distinguishing these illusions from the reality. If, in a poem, the ideal and fanciful predominate, we may indeed be surprised for a moment, but can never be brought to feel for objects which either have no existence, or are too far removed from our common nature—and on the other hand, if poetry dwell too much on realities, we soon grow weary; for we see them wherever we turn; they sadden each minute of our existence; they disgust us ever, because we know them even to satiety:—again, if reality and fiction be not intimately blended into one whole, they mutually oppose and destroy one another. Petrarch does not afford many

instances of so happy a combination of truth with fiction, as when he describes Laura's features immediately after expiring—

Pallida no, ma più che neve bianca—
Parea posar come persona stanca.

Quasi un dolce dormir ne' suoi begli occhi,
Sendo lo spirto già da lei diviso—
Morte bella parea nel suo bel viso.

No earthy hue her pallid cheek display'd,
But the pure snow—
Like one recumbent from her toils she lay,
Losing in sleep the labours of the day—
And from her parting soul an heavenly trace
Seem'd yet to play upon her lifeless face,
Where death enamour'd sate, and smiled with angel grace.
BOYD'S Transl.

Had the translator kept closer in the last line to the original words, "Death seemed beautiful on the lovely features of Laura," he would have conveyed a higher and yet more credible notion of her beauty, and insensibly changed, into an agreeable sensation, the horror with which we regard a corpse. But "Death sitting enamour'd in Laura's face," exhibits no distinct image, unless it be that of the allegorical form of Death transmuted into an angel sitting upon the face of a woman—

which affords a striking exemplification of the absurdities arising from the unskilful mixture of truth with fiction.

VIII. PETRARCH often surrounds the reality with ideal decorations so luxuriantly, that while we gaze at his images they disappear—

Obscured and lost in flood of golden light. ROGERS.

And the poet by whom this line is suggested, justly remarks—that "True taste is an excellent economist, and delights in producing great effects by small means." Dante selects the beauties that lie scattered throughout created Nature, and embodies them in one single subject. The artists who combined in the Apollo of Belvidere, and the Venus de' Medicis, the various beauties observed in different individuals, produced forms, which, though strictly human, have an air of perfection not to be met with upon the earth: however, when contemplating them, we are led insensibly to indulge in the illusion, that mankind may possess such heavenly beauty—

Stiamo, Amor, a veder la gloria nostra,
Cose sopra natura altere e nove:
Vedi ben quanta in lei dolcezza piove;
Vedi lume che 'l cielo in terra mostra;

Vedi quant' arte indora, e imperla, e innostra
L' abito eletto, e mai non visto altrove,
Che dolcemente i piedi, e gli occhi move
Per questa di bei colli ombrosa chiostra.
L'erbetta verde, e i fior di color mille
Sparsi sotto quell' elce antiqua e negra,
Pregan pur che 'l bel pie' li prema o tocchi;
E 'l ciel di vaghe e lucide faville
S' accende intorno, e 'n vista si rallegra
D' esser fatto seren da sì begli occhi.

Here stand we, Love, our glory to behold—
How, passing nature, lovely, high, and rare!
Behold! what showers of sweetness falling there!
What floods of light by heav'n to earth unroll'd!
How shine her robes, in purple, pearls, and gold
So richly wrought, with skill beyond compare!
How glance her feet!—her beaming eyes how fair
Through the dark cloister which these hills enfold!
The verdant turf, and flowers of thousand hues
Beneath yon oak's old canopy of state,
Spring round her feet to pay their amorous duty.
The heavens, in joyful reverence, cannot choose
But light up all their fires, to celebrate
Her praise, whose presence charms their awful beauty.

MERIVALE.

This description makes us long to find such a woman in the world; but while we admire the poet, and envy him the bliss of his amorous transports, we cannot but perceive that the flowers "that courted the tread of her foot," the sky "that grew more beautiful in her

presence," the atmosphere "that borrowed new splendour from her eyes," are mere visions which tempt us to embark with him in the pursuit of an unattainable chimæra. We are induced to think, that Laura must have been endowed with more than human loveliness, since she was able to kindle her lover's imagination to such a degree of enthusiasm, as to cause him to adopt such fantastic illusions, and we conceive the extremity of his passion; but cannot share his amorous ecstasies for a beauty which we never beheld and never shall behold.

IX. On the contrary, the beautiful maiden seen afar off by Dante, in a landscape of the terrestrial paradise, instead of appearing an imaginary being, seems to unite in herself all the attractions which are found in those lovely creatures we sometimes meet, whom we grieve to lose sight of, and to whom fancy is perpetually recurring—the poet's picture recals the original more distinctly to our memory, and enshrines it in our imagination—

Una donna soletta, che si gia
Cantando ed iscegliendo fior da fiore,
Ond' era pinta tutta la sua via.
Deh bella donna, ch' a' raggi d'amore
Ti scaldi, s' io vo' credere a' sembianti,
Che soglion' esser testimon del cuore,

Vengati voglia di trarreti avanti,
Diss' io a lei, verso questa riviera,
Tanto ch' io possa intender che tu canti.—
Come si volge con le piante strette
A terra, e intra sè, donna che balli,
E piede innanzi piede a pena mette,
Volsesi 'n su' vermigli ed in su' gialli
Fioretti, verso me, non altrimenti,
Che vergine, che gli occhi onesti avvalli;
E fece i prieghi miei esser contenti,
Sì appressando sè, che 'l dolce suono
Veniva a me co' suoi intendimenti.

I beheld
A lady all alone, who, singing, went,
And culling flower from flower, wherewith her way
Was all o'er painted. "Lady beautiful!
Thou, who (if looks, that use to speak the heart,
Are worthy of our trust) with love's own beam
Dost warm thee," thus to her my speech I fram'd;
"Ah! please thee hither tow'rds the streamlet bend
Thy steps so near, that I may list thy song."—
As when a lady, turning in the dance,
Doth foot it featly, and advances scarce
One step before the other to the ground;
Over the yellow and vermillion flowers
Thus turn'd she at my suit, most maiden-like,
Veiling her sober eyes: and came so near,
That I distinctly caught the dulcet sound.

CARY's Transl.

Such is the amazing power with which Dante mingles the realities of nature with ideal accessories, that he creates an illusion which no

subsequent reflection is able to dissipate. All that grace and beauty, that warmth and light of love, that vivacity and cheerfulness of youth, that hallowed modesty of a virgin, which we observe, though separately and intermixed with defects, in different persons, are here concentrated into one alone; whilst her song, her dance, and her gathering of flowers, give life, and charm, and motion, to the picture.—To judge fairly between these two poets, it appears, that Petrarch excels in awakening the heart to a deep feeling of its existence; and Dante, in leading the imagination to add to the interest and novelty of nature. Probably a genius never existed, that enjoyed these two powers at once in a pre-eminent degree.

X. Having both worked upon plans suited to their respective talents, the result has been two kinds of poetry, productive of opposite moral effects. Petrarch makes us see every thing through the medium of one predominant passion, habituates us to indulge in those propensities which by keeping the heart in perpetual disquietude, paralize intellectual exertion—entice us into a morbid indulgence of our feelings, and withdraw us from active life. Dante, like all primitive poets, is the historian

of the manners of his age, the prophet of his country, and the painter of mankind; and calls into action all the faculties of our soul to reflect on all the vicissitudes of the world. He describes all passions, all actions—the charm and the horror of the most different scenes. He places men in the despair of Hell, in the hope of Purgatory, and in the blessedness of Paradise. He observes them in youth, in manhood, and in old age. He has brought together those of both sexes, of all religions, of all occupations, of different nations, and ages; yet he never takes them in masses—he always presents them as individuals; speaks to every one of them, studies their words, and watches their countenances.—"I found," says he, in a letter to Can della Scala, "the original of my Hell, in the earth we inhabit." While describing the realms of death, he catches at every opportunity to bring us back to the occupations and affections of the living world. Perceiving the sun about to quit our hemisphere, he breaks out into—

Era già l'ora, che volge 'l desio
A' naviganti, e intenerisce il core
Lo dì, ch' han detto à' dolci amici Addio;
E che lo nuovo peregrin d' amore
Punge, se ode squilla di lontano,
Che paja 'l giorno pianger, che si muore.

'Twas now the hour when fond desire renews
To him who wanders o'er the pathless main,
Raising unbidden tears, the last adieus
Of tender friends, whom fancy shapes again;
When the late parted pilgrim thrills with thought
Of his lov'd home, if o'er the distant plain,
Perchance, his ears the village chimes have caught,
Seeming to mourn the close of dying day.
MERIVALE.

There is a passage very like this in Apollonius Rhodius, whose many beauties, so admired in the imitations of Virgil, are seldom sought for in the original.—

Night then brought darkness o'er the earth: at sea
The mariners their eyes from shipboard raised,
Fix'd on the star Orion, and the Bear.
The traveller, and the keeper of the gate,
Rock'd with desire of sleep; and slumber now
Fell heavy on some mother, who had wept
Her children in the grave. ELTON'S Transl.

By digressions similar to this, introduced without apparent art or effort, Dante interests us for all mankind; whilst Petrarch, being interested only about himself, alludes to men at sea at eventide, only to excite greater compassion for his own sufferings—

E i naviganti in qualche chiusa valle
Gettan le membra, poi che 'l sol s'asconde,

Sul duro legno e sotto l' aspre gonne:
Ma io; perchè s' attuffi in mezzo l'onde,
E lassi Ispagna dietro alle sue spalle,
E Granata e Marocco e le Colonne,
E gli uomini e le donne
E 'l mondo, e gli animali
Acquetino i lor mali,
Fine non pongo al mio ostinato affanno:
E duolmi ch' ogni giorno arroge al danno;
Ch' i' son già pur crescendo in questa voglia
Ben presso al decim' anno,
Nè poss' indovinar chi me ne scioglia.

And in some shelter'd bay, at evening's close,
The mariners their rude coats round them fold,
Stretch'd on the rugged plank in deep repose:
But I, though Phœbus sink into the main
And leave Granada wrapt in night, with Spain,
Morocco, and the Pillars famed of old,
Though all of human kind
And every creature blest
All hush their ills to rest,
No end to my unceasing sorrows find;
And still the sad account swells day by day;
For since these thoughts on my lorn spirit prey,
I see the tenth year roll,
Nor hope of freedom springs in my desponding soul.

LADY DACRE.

Hence Petrarch's poetry wraps us in an idle melancholy, in the softest and sweetest visions, in the error of depending upon others'

affection, and leads us vainly to run after perfect happiness, until we plunge headlong into that despair which ensues,

> When Hope has fled affrighted from thy face,
> And giant Sorrow fills the empty place.

Still those who meet with this fate are comparatively very few, while far the greater number only learn from sentimental reading how to work more successfully upon impassioned minds, or to spread over vice a thicker cloak of hypocrisy. The number of Petrarch's imitators in Italy may be ascribed to the example of those Church dignitaries and learned men, who, to justify their commerce with the other sex, borrowed the language of Platonic love from his poetry. It is also admirably calculated for a Jesuits' college, since it inspires devotion, mysticism, and retirement, and enervates the minds of youth. But since the late revolutions have stirred up other passions, and a different system of education has been established, Petrarch's followers have rapidly diminished; and those of Dante have written poems more suited to rouse the public spirit of Italy. Dante applied his poetry to the vicissitudes of his own time, when liberty was making her dying struggle against

tyranny; and he descended to the tomb with the last heroes of the middle age. Petrarch lived amongst those who prepared the inglorious heritage of servitude for the next fifteen generations.

XI. It was about the decline of Dante's life that the constitutions of the Italian States underwent a total and almost universal change, in consequence of which a new character was suddenly assumed by men, manners, literature, and religion. It was then that the Popes and Emperors, by residing out of Italy, abandoned her to factions, which having fought for independence or for power, continued to tear themselves to pieces through animosity, until they reduced their country to such a state of exhaustion, as to make it an easy prey to demagogues, to despots, and to foreigners. The Guelphs were no longer sanctioned by the Church, in their struggle for popular rights against the feudatories of the empire. The Ghibellines no longer allied themselves to the Emperors to preserve their privileges as great proprietors. Florence, and other small republics, after extirpating their nobles, were governed by merchants, who, having neither ancestors to imitate, nor generosity of sentiment,

nor a military education, carried on their intestine feuds by calumny and confiscation. Afraid of a domestic dictatorship, they opposed their external enemies by foreign leaders of mercenary troops, often composed of adventurers and vagabonds from every country, who plundered friends and foes alike, exasperated the discords, and polluted the morals, of the nation. French princes reigned at Naples; and to extend their influence over the south of Italy, destroyed the very shadow of the imperial authority there, by stimulating the Guelphs to all the extravagances of democracy. Meanwhile the nobles who upheld the Ghibelline faction in the north of Italy, being possessed of the wealth and strength of the country, continued to wage incessant civil wars, until they, with their towns and their vassals, were all subjected to the military sway of the victorious leaders, who were often murdered by their own soldiers, and oftener by the heirs apparent of their power. Venice alone, being surrounded by the sea, and consequently exempted from the danger of invasion, and from the necessity of confiding her armies to a single patrician, enjoyed an established form of government. Nevertheless, to preserve and extend her colonies and her commerce, she

carried on, in the Mediterranean, a destructive contest with other maritime cities. The Genoese having lost their principal fleet, bartered their liberties with the tyrants of Lombardy, in exchange for assistance. They were thus enabled to gratify their hatred, and defeat the Venetians, who to repeat their attacks exhausted their resources; and both states now fought less for interest, than revenge. It was then that Petrarch's exhortations to peace were so haughtily answered by the Doge Andrea Dandolo*. Thus the Italians, though then the arbiters of the seas, weakened themselves to such a degree, by their blind animosities, that, in the ensuing century, Columbus was compelled to beg the aid of foreign princes, to open that path of navigation which has since utterly destroyed the commercial grandeur of Italy.

XII. MEANWHILE the Popes and Cardinals, vigilantly watched at Avignon, were sometimes the forced, and often the voluntary, abettors of French policy. The German Princes, beginning to despise the Papal excommunication, refused either to elect Emperors pa-

* Essay on the Char. of Petr. Sect. IV.

tronized by the Holy See, or to lead forth their subjects to the conquest of the Holy Land, a device, by which from the beginning of the twelfth to the end of the thirteenth century, all the armies of Europe had actually been at the disposal of the Popes. The wild and enterprising fanaticism of religion having thus ceased with the crusades, dwindled into a gloomy and suspicious superstition: new articles of belief brought from the east, gave birth to new Christian sects: the circulation of the classics, the diffusion of a taste for Greek metaphysics, and the Aristotelian materialism, spread through Europe by the writings of Averroes, induced some of Dante's and Petrarch's contemporaries to doubt even the existence of God*. It was then deemed expedient to maintain both the authority of the Gospel, and the temporal influence of the Church, by the arbitrary and mysterious laws of the Holy Inquisition. Several of the Popes who filled the chair of St. Peter during the

* Guido Cavalcanti alcuna volta speculando, molto astratto dagli uomini diveniva; e perciò che egli alquanto teneva della opinione degli Epicurj, si diceva tra la gente volgare che queste sue speculazioni eran solo in cercare se trovar si potesse che Iddio non fosse. Boccacio, Giorn. vi. Nov. 9.—See also Dante, Inf. cant. 10., and Petrarch, Senil. lib. 5. ep. 3.

life of Dante, had been originally friars of the order of St. Dominick, the founder of that tribunal; and their successors, in the age of Petrarch, were prelates of France, either corrupted by luxury, or devoted to the interest of their country. The terror which had been propagated by the Dominicans, was followed by the sale of indulgences, and the celebration of the jubilees, instituted about this time by Boniface VIII. As the sovereign pontiffs were no longer allowed to employ in political projects the riches which they derived from their religious ascendancy, ambition yielded to covetousness; and they compounded their declining right of bestowing crowns for subsidies to maintain a luxurious court, and to leave behind them a genealogy of wealthy heirs. The people, though exasperated by oppression, and eager for insurrection, were disunited, and not enlightened enough to bring about a lasting revolution. They revolted only to overturn their ancient laws, to change their masters, and to yield to a more arbitrary government. The monarchs, opposed by an ungovernable aristocracy, were unable to raise armies sufficient to establish their power at home, and their conquests abroad. States were aggrandized more by craft than by bravery; and

their rulers became less violent, and more treacherous. The hardy crimes of the barbarous ages, gave place, by degrees, to the insidious vices of civilization. The cultivation of classical literature improved the general taste, and added to the stores of erudition; but at the same time, it enervated the boldness and originality of natural talent: and those who might have been inimitable writers in their maternal language, were satisfied to waste their powers in being the imitators of the Latins. Authors ceased to take any part in passing events, and remained distant spectators of them. Some detailed to their fellow-citizens the past glory, and warned them of the approaching ruin, of their country; and others repaid their patrons with flattery: for it was precisely in the fourteenth century that tyrannical governments began to teach their successors the policy of retaining men of letters in their pay to deceive the world. Such is the concise history of Italy, during the fifty-three years which elapsed from the death of Dante to the death of Petrarch.

XIII. THEIR endeavours to bring their country under the government of one sovereign, and to abolish the Pope's temporal power,

forms the only point of resemblance between these two characters. Fortune seemed to have conspired with nature, in order to separate them by an irreconcilable diversity. Dante went through a more regular course of studies, and at a time when Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas reigned alone in universities. Their stern method and maxims taught him to write only after long meditation—to keep in view "a great practical end, which is that of human life*"—and to pursue it steadily with a predetermined plan. Poetical ornaments seem constantly employed by Dante, only to throw a light upon his subjects; and he never allows his fancy to violate the laws which he had previously imposed upon his own genius—

> L'ingegno affreno,
> Perchè non corra che virtù nol guidi.—INFERNO.
> Più non mi lascia gire il fren dell'arte.—PURG.
>
> I rein and curb
> The powers of nature in me, lest they run
> Where virtue guide not—
> Mine art
> With warning bridle checks me.—CARY's Transl.

The study of the classics, and the growing enthusiasm for Platonic speculations which

* DANTE, Convito.

Petrarch defended against the Aristotelians*, coincided with his natural inclination, and formed his mind on the works of Cicero, Seneca, and St. Augustin. He caught their desultory manner, their ornamented diction, even when handling subjects the most unpoetical; and, above all, their mixture of individual feelings with the universal principles of philosophy and religion. His pen followed the incessant restlessness of his soul: every subject allured his thoughts, and seldom were all his thoughts devoted to one alone. Thus being more eager to undertake, than persevering to complete, the great number of his unfinished manuscripts at last impressed him with the idea, that the result of industry would be little more than that of absolute idleness†.—Dante avows that in his youth, he was sinking beneath a long and almost unconquerable despondence; and complains of that stillness of mind which enchains the faculties without de-

* This is the main object of his treatise, *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantiâ.*

† *Quicquid ferè opusculorum mihi excidit quæ tam multa fuerunt, ut usque ad hanc ætatem, me exerceant, ac fatigent: fuit enim mihi ut corpus, sic ingenium magis pollens dexteritate, quam viribus. Itaque multa mihi facilia cogitatu, quæ executione difficilia prætermisi.*—Epist. ad Posterit.

stroying them*. But his mind, in recovering its elasticity, never desisted until it had attained its pursuit; and no human power or interest could divert him from his meditations†.

XIV. The intellect of both could only act in unison with the organic and unalterable emotions of their hearts. Dante's fire was more deeply concentrated; it could burn with one passion only at a time: and if Boccacio does not overcharge the picture, Dante, during several months after the death of Beatrice, had the feelings and appearance of a savage‡. Petrarch was agitated at the same time by different passions: they roused, but they also counteracted, each other; and his fire was rather flashing than burning—expanding itself as it were from a soul unable to bear all its warmth, and yet anxious to attract through it the attention of every eye. Vanity

* Dante, Vita nuova.

† Poggio,—Dante, Purg. cant. xvii.

‡ Egli era già, sì per lo lagrimare e sì per l'afflizione, che al cuore sentiva dentro, e sì per non aver di sè alcuna cura di fuori, divenuto quasi una cosa salvatica a riguardare, magro, barbuto, e quasi tutto trasformato da quello, che avanti esser soleva; in tanto che 'l suo aspetto non che negli amici, ma eziandio in ciascun altro a forza di sè metteva compassione.—Boccacio, Vita di Dante.

made Petrarch ever eager and ever afraid of the opinion even of those individuals over whom he felt his natural superiority.—Pride was the prominent characteristic of Dante. He was pleased with his sufferings, as the means of exerting his fortitude,—and with his imperfections, as the necessary attendants of extraordinary qualities,—and with the consciousness of his internal worth, because it enabled him to look down with scorn upon other men and their opinions—

Che ti fa ciò che quivi si pispiglia?—
Lascia dir le genti;
Sta come torre ferma, che non crolla
Giammai la cima per soffiar de' venti.

How
Imports it thee what thing is whisper'd here?—
To their babblings leave
The crowd; be as a tower that firmly set,
Shakes not its top for any blast that blows.

CARY's Transl.

The power of despising, which many boast, which very few really possess, and with which Dante was uncommonly gifted by nature, afforded him the highest delight of which a lofty mind is susceptible—

Lo collo poi con le braccia mi cinse,
Baciommi in volto, e disse: Alma sdegnosa!
Benedetta colei che in te s' incinse.

> Then with his arms my neck
> Encircling, kiss'd my cheek and spake: O soul
> Justly disdainful! blest was she in whom
> Thou was conceived. CARY's Transl.

Dante's haughty demeanour towards the princes whose protection he solicited, was that of a republican by birth, an aristocrat by party, a statesman, and a warrior, who, after having lived in affluence and dignity, was proscribed in his thirty-seventh year, compelled to wander from town to town "as the man who stripping his visage of all shame, plants himself in the public way, and stretching out his hand, trembles through every vein."—"I will say no more: I know that my words are dark; but my countrymen shall help thee soon to a comment on the text, *To tremble through every vein**."—Petrarch, born in exile, and brought up, according to his own confession, in indigence†, and as the intended servant of a court, was year after year enriched by the great, till enabled to decline new favours, he alluded to it with the complacency inevitable to all those who, whether by chance, or industry, or merit, have escaped from penury and humiliation.

* Purgat. cant. xi. towards the end.

† *Honestis parentibus, fortuna (ut verum fatear) ad inopiam vergente, natus sum.*—Epist. ad Post..

XV. BEING formed to love, Petrarch courted the good-will of others, sighed for more friendship than human selfishness is willing to allow, and lowered himself in the eyes, and possibly in the affections, of the persons most devoted to him. His disappointments in this respect often embittered his soul, and extorted from him the confession, "that he feared those whom he loved*." His enemies knowing that, if he readily gave vent to his anger, he was still more ready to forget injuries, found fair game for ridicule† in his passionate temper, and provoked him to commit himself even in his old age with apologies‡.—Dante, on the contrary, was one of those rare individuals who are above the reach of ridicule, and whose natural dignity is enhanced, even by the blows of malignity. In his friends he inspired less commiseration than awe; in his enemies, fear and hatred—but never contempt. His wrath was inexorable; with him vengeance was not only a natural impulse but a duty§: and he enjoyed the certainty of that

* Senil. Lib. 13. Ep. 7.

† *Indignantissimi animi, sed offensarum obliviosissimi—ira mihi persæpe nocuit, aliis nunquam.*—Epist. ad Post.

‡ AGOSTINI, Scritt. Venez. vol. 1. p. 5.

§ *Che bell' onor s'acquista in far vendetta.* DANTE, Convito. —See also, Inferno, cant. xxix. vers. 31—36.

slow but everlasting revenge which "his wrath brooded over in secret silence"—

Fa dolce l' ira sua nel suo secreto—
Taci e lascia volger gli anni:
Sì ch' io non posso dir se non che pianto
Giusto verrà di retro a' vostri danni.

Let the destined years come round:
Nor may I tell thee more, save that the meed
Of sorrow well-deserved, shall quit your wrongs.
CARY's Transl.

One would easily imagine his portrait from these lines:

Egli non ci diceva alcuna cosa:
Ma lasciavane gir, solo guardando,
A guisa di Leon, quando si posa.

He spoke not aught, but let us onward pass,
Eyeing us as a Lion on his watch.
CARY's Transl.

As Petrarch without love would probably never have become a great poet—so had it not been for injustice and persecution which kindled his indignation, Dante, perhaps, would never have persevered to complete—

Il poema sacro,
A cui han posto mano e cielo e terra,
Sì che mi ha fatto per molti anni macro.

The sacred poem, that hath made
Both heaven and earth copartners in its toil,
And with lean abstinence, through many a year,
Faded my brow. CARY's Transl.

XVI. THE gratification of knowing and asserting the truth, and of being able to make it resound even from their graves, is so keen as to outbalance all the vexations to which the life of men of genius is generally doomed, not so much by the coldness and envy of mankind, as by the burning passions of their own hearts. This sentiment was a more abundant source of comfort to Dante than to Petrarch—

Mentre ch' i' era a Virgilio congiunto,
Su per lo monte, che l'anime cura,
E discendendo nel mondo defunto,
Dette mi fur di mia vita futura
Parole gravi; avvegnach'io mi senta
Ben tetragono a i colpi di ventura.—

Ben veggio, Padre mio, sì come sprona
Lo tempo verso me, per colpo darmi
Tal, ch'è più grave a chi più s'abbandona:
Perchè di previdenza è buon ch' io m'armi.—

O sacrosante Vergini! se fami,
Freddi, o vigilie, mai per voi soffersi,
Cagion mi sprona ch' io mercè ne chiami.
Or convien ch' Elicona per me versi
Ed Urania m'ajuti col suo coro
Forti cose a pensar mettere in versi.—

E s' io al vero son timido amico,
Temo di perder vita tra coloro,
Che questo tempo chiameranno antico.

I, the whilst I scal'd
With Virgil, the soul-purifying mount,
And visited the nether world of woe,
Touching my future destiny have heard
Words grievous, though I feel me on all sides
Well squar'd to fortune's blows.—

My father! well I mark how time spurs on
Toward me, ready to inflict the blow,
Which falls most heavily on him who most
Abandoneth himself. Therefore 'tis good
I should forecast.—

O ye thrice holy Virgins! for your sakes
If e'er I suffer'd hunger, cold, and watching,
Occasion calls on me to crave your bounty.
Now through my breast let Helicon his stream
Pour copious, and Urania with her choir
Arise to aid me; while the verse unfolds
Things, that do almost mock the grasp of thought.—

And, if I am a timid friend to truth,
I fear my life may perish among those
To whom these days shall be of ancient date.

CARY's Transl.

And from a letter of Dante lately discovered *, it appears that about the year 1316, his friends succeeded in obtaining his restoration to his

* APPENDIX, No. VI.

country and his possessions, on condition that he compounded with his calumniators, avowed himself guilty, and asked pardon of the commonwealth. The following was his answer on the occasion, to one of his kinsmen, whom he calls 'Father,' because, perhaps, he was an ecclesiastic; or, more probably, because he was older than the poet.

XVII. "FROM your letter, which I received with due respect and affection, I observe how much you have at heart my restoration to my country. I am bound to you the more gratefully, since an exile rarely finds a friend. But, after mature consideration, I must, by my answer, disappoint the wishes of some little minds; and I confide in the judgment to which your impartiality and prudence will lead you. Your nephew and mine has written to me, what indeed had been mentioned by many other friends, that, by a decree concerning the exiles, I am allowed to return to Florence, provided I pay a certain sum of money, and submit to the humiliation of asking and receiving absolution; wherein, father, I see two propositions that are ridiculous and impertinent. I speak of the impertinence of those who mention such conditions to me; for, in your

letter, dictated by judgment and discretion, there is no such thing. Is such an invitation to return to his country glorious for Dante, after suffering in banishment almost fifteen years? Is it thus, then, they would recompence innocence which all the world knows, and the labour and fatigue of unremitting study? Far from the man who is familiar with philosophy, be the senseless baseness of a heart of earth, that could act like a little sciolist, and imitate the infamy of some others, by offering himself up as it were in chains. Far from the man who cries aloud for justice, be this compromise, for money, with his persecutors. No, father, this is not the way that shall lead me back to my country. But I shall return with hasty steps, if you or any other can open me a way that shall not derogate from the fame and honour of Dante; but if by no such way Florence can be entered, then Florence I will never enter. What! shall I not every where enjoy the sight of the sun and stars? and may I not seek and contemplate, in every corner of the earth under the canopy of heaven, consoling and delightful truth, without first rendering myself inglorious, nay infamous, to the people and republic of Florence? Bread, I hope, will not fail me."—Yet he continued to experience,

How salt the savour is of others' bread,
How hard the passage to descend and climb
By others' stairs. CARY's Transl.

His countrymen persecuted even his memory; he was excommunicated after death by the Pope, and his remains were threatened to be disinterred and burnt, and their ashes scattered to the wind*. Petrarch closed his life with the reputation of a saint, for whom Heaven performed miracles†; and the Venetian Senate made a law against those who purloined his bones, and sold them as relics‡.

XVIII. INDEED we might imagine that Petrarch by faithfully and generously discharging all the social duties towards every body about him, and by constantly endeavouring to subdue his passions, was esteemed virtuous and felt happy. Virtuous he was; but he was more unhappy than Dante, who never betrayed that restlessness and perplexity of soul which lowered Petrarch in his own estimation, and made him exclaim in his last days, "In my youth I despised all the world but myself;

* BARTOLUS, *Lex de rejudicandis reis*, ad cod. 1.

† *Ea res...miraculo ostendit divinum illum spiritum Deo familiarissimum.*—VILLANI, Vit. Petr. sul fine.

‡ TOMASINI, Petrarcha Redivivus, pag. 30.

in my manhood I despised myself; now I despise both the world and myself*." Had they lived in habits of intercourse, Dante would have possessed over his competitor that superiority, which all men, who act from predetermined and unalterable resolutions, have over those who yield to variable and momentary impulses. — Petrarch might have said, with Dante—

> Conscienza m'assicura
> La buona compagnia, che l'uom francheggia
> Sotto l'usbergo del sentirsi pura.
>
> Conscience makes me firm,
> The boon companion who her strong breast-plate
> Buckles on him who feels no guilt within,
> And bids him on and fear not. CARY'S Transl.

But his ardent aspirations after moral perfection, and the despair of attaining it, made Petrarch look forward "with trembling hope" to the day that should summon him to the presence of an inexorable Judge. Dante believed, that by his sufferings on earth he atoned for the errors of humanity—that

> So wide arms
> Hath goodness infinite, that it receives
> All who turn to it.

---

* Senil. Lib. 13. Ep. 7

Ma la bontà divina ha sì gran braccia
Che prende ciò che si rivolge a lei—

and he seems to address Heaven in the attitude of a worshipper rather than a suppliant. Being convinced "that Man is then truly happy when he freely exercises all his energies*," Dante walked through the world with an assured step "keeping his vigils"—

So that, nor night nor slumber with close stealth
Convey'd from him a single step in all
The goings on of time. CARY's Transl.

He collected the opinions, the follies, the vicissitudes, the miseries and the passions that agitate mankind, and left behind him a monument, which while it humbles us by the representation of our own wretchedness, should make us glory that we partake of the same nature with such a man; and encourage us to make the best use of our fleeting existence. Petrarch was led by a wisdom rather contemplative than active, to think that our toils and exertions in behalf of mankind far exceed any benefit they derive from them; that each step after all but brings us nearer to the grave; that death is the best boon of Providence, and the world

* *Humanum genus, potissimè liberum, optimè se habet.*—DANTE, de Monarchia.

to come our only secure dwelling-place. He therefore faltered on through life with the conviction, "that a weariness and disgust of every thing were naturally inherent in his soul*"—and thus he paid the price of those favours, which nature, fortune, and the world, had heaped upon him, without the alloy even of ordinary reverses.

* *Cum omnium rerum fastidium atque odium naturaliter in animo meo insitum ferre non possim.*—Epist. ad Post.

APPENDIX I.

REFERRING TO THE ESSAY

ON THE LOVE OF PETRARCH, SECT. XI.

AND THE ESSAY

ON HIS POETRY, SECT. XV.

SPECIMENS

OF THE LATIN POETRY

OF PETRARCH.

PETRARCH'S

DESCRIPTIONS OF VAUCLUSE.

Si nihil, aut gelidi facies nitidissima fontis,
Aut nemorum convexa cavis arcana latebris
(At placidis benè nota feris Dryadumque catervis,
Et Faunis accepta domus) nihil ista, poëtis
Opportuna sacris, sub apricis rupibus antra
Permulcent animum; at clementissimus aer
Allicit, ac montis præruptus in æthera vertex
Liberiore situ liquidas extentus ad auras,
Collibus aut Bromius frondens, aut sylva Minervæ
Gratior aut Veneri; et utramque tegentia ripam
Herculeis umbrosa comis; distinctaque subter
Floribus innumeris, et dulce virentibus herbis,
Prata trahunt oculos, aut hic qui separat arva,
Atque soporifero clausam qui murmure vallem
Implet inexhausto descendens alveus amne:
Et videt hinc illinc Nympharum mille choreas,
Musarumque audit totidem per littora cantus.

Tom. III. pag. 80. Lib. I. Epist. 4.

Populus est ingens, niveo contermina fonti,
Quæ simul et fluvium, et ripas, et proxima campi
Jugera ramorum densa testudine opacat.
Hic olim multaque loci dulcedine captum,
Et rerum novitate oculos, animumque movente

Aggere florigero magnum posuisse Robertum
Membra diu lassata ferunt; curisque gravatum
Pectus et exigui laudasse silentia ruris.

Pag. 80. Lib. I. Epist. 4.

Hic mecum exilio reduces, statione repostâ,
Pierides habitant; rarus superadvenit hospes,
Nec nisi rara nocent noti miracula fontis.
Vix mora nostra quidem, licet annua, bisve semelve
Congregat optatos Clausa sub Valle sodales.

Pag. 83. Lib. I. Epist. 7.

Turbida nos urbis species, et dulcis amœni
Ruris amor fulerat nitidos invisere fontes,
Mirandumque caput Sorgæ, quod vatibus ingens
Calcar et ingenio generosas admovet alas.
Hic ubi te mecum convulsa revolvere saxa
Non puduit, campumque satis laxare malignum:
Vernantem variis videas nunc floribus ortum
Naturâ cedente operi, pars amne profundo
Cingitur, ad partem præruptis rupibus ambit
Mons gelidus, calidumque jugis obversus ad Austrum.
Hinc medio ruit umbra die, pars nuda tepenti
Porta fovet Zephyro: sed et hinc procul arcet agrestis
Murus, ab accessu prohibens pecudesque virosque.
Aerias sed enim ramis viridantibus altè
Littoreas volucres scopulis intexere nidos:
Has musco velare domos; sed frondibus illas,
Progeniemque mopem fidis trepidare sub alis,
Aspicias, atque ore cibos captare trementi.
Concava tum querulis complentur vocibus antra,
Et color hinc oculos, illinc sonus advocat aures
Certatim: dulci spectacula plena tumultu
Suspendunt, gratove quies condita labore.
Hic unus cum pace dies exactus Aventi

Vix totus, tot me laqueis, tot curia curis
Implicat, id meritum quin vincula nota libenter,
Infelix, tritâque jugum cervice recepi.
Nunc tamen illius juvat hic meminisse diei.
Dulce fuit, veterumque sacros memorare labores,
Nostrorum immemores, hic cœnam in tempora noctis
Traximus, alterno pariter sermone relicti.
Singula dum repeto, lux illa brevissima furtim
Labitur, et Clausâ vix serum Valle revolvor,
Faucibus egressus, quum jam sylvestria Tempe,
Umbrososque sinus spectans post terga viderem,
Lucidus ac mecum ad lævam descenderet amnis.
——— Brevis angulus hæret
Rupibus; ille quidem Nympharum ab origine sedes,
Nunc mea: Pieridumque domus satis ampla, quod hospes
Adveniet rarus, sordent quia carmina vulgo,
Vitaque nostra fruor sub judice facta furenti.
Hanc modo vallamus, quam nulla revellit aquæ vis,
Ni montem oppositum a radicibus eruat imis.
Si tibi cura animum dederit, si curia tempus
Omnia mutato nostrum decus ordine rerum,
Me Nymphis, Nymphasque mihi cessisse vicissim,
Et cecidisse minas, compressaque bella videbis.
Retia nunc sunt arma mihi, et labyrinthius error
Vimineâ contextus acu; qui pervius undis
Piscibus est carcer, nullâ remeabilis arte:
Pro gladiis curvos hamos, fallacibus escis
Implicitos, tremulasque sudes, parvumque tridentem
Piscator modò factus ego, quò terga natantum
Sistere jam didici, duroque affigere saxo.
Primitias en flumineæ transmittimus artis
Et versus quot Clausa domos habet arctaque Vallis,
Quæ tibi pisciculos et rustica carmina pascit.

Pag. 104, 105. Lib. III. Epist. 3.

FROM THE AFRICA.—Book VI.

THE DEATH OF MAGO.

Hic postquam medio iuvenis stetit æquore Pœnus
Vulneris increscens dolor, et vicinia duræ
Mortis, agens stimulis ardentibus, urget anhelum.
Ille videns propius supremi temporis horam
Incipit: Heu qualis fortunæ terminus altæ est!
Quam lætis mens cæca bonis! Furor ecce potentum
Præcipiti gaudere loco; status ille procellis
Subiacet innumeris, et finis ad alta levatis
Est ruere. Heu tremulum magnorum culmen honorum
Spesque hominum fallax, et inanis gloria fictis
Illita blanditiis! heu, vita incerta, labori
Dedita perpetuo! semperque, heu, certa, nec unquam
Sat mortis prævisa dies! heu sortis iniquæ
Natus homo in terris! Animalia cuncta quiescunt;
Irrequietus homo, perque omnes anxius annos,
Ad mortem festinat iter: Mors, optima rerum:

FROM THE AFRICA.—Book VI.

THE DEATH OF MAGO.

The Carthaginian rose—and when he found
The increasing anguish of his mortal wound
All hope forbid—with difficult, slow breath
He thus address'd the coming hour of death—
"Farewell to all my longings after fame!
Cursed love of power, are such thine end and aim
Oh, blind to all that might have made thy bliss,
And must ambition's frenzy come to this?
From height to height aspiring still to rise,
Man stands rejoicing on the precipice,
Nor sees the innumerable storms that wait
To level all the projects of the great.
Oh, trembling pinnacle of power on earth!
Deceitful hopes! and glory blazon'd forth
With false, fictitious blandishments! Oh, life
Of doubt and danger, and perpetual strife
With death! And, *thou*! worse than this night of woe
That comest to all, but ah! when none can know,
Hour singled from all years! why must man bear
A lot so sad? The tribes of earth and air
No thoughts of future ill in life molest,
And when they die, sleep on, and take their rest;

Tu retegis sola errores, et crimina vitæ
Discutis exactæ. Video nunc quanta paravi
Ah! miser incassum, subii quot sponte labores,
Quos licuit transire mihi. Moriturus, ad astra
Scandere quærit homo; sed Mors docet, omnia quo sint
Nostra loco. Latio quid profuit arma potenti,
Quid tectis inferre faces? quid fœdera mundi
Turbare, atque urbes tristi miscere tumultu?
Aurea marmoreis quidve alta palatia muris
Erexisse juvat, postquam sic sidere lævo
In pelago periturus eram? Carissime frater,
Quanta paras animis, heu, fati ignarus acerbi
Ignarusque mei? Dixit; tum liber in auras
Spiritus egreditur, spatiis unde altior æquis
Despiceret Romam, simul et Carthaginis urbem.
Ante diem felix abiens, ne summa videret
Excidia, et claris quod restat dedecus armis,
Fraternosque, suosque simul, patriæque dolores.

But man in restless dreams spends all his years,
And shortens life with death's encroaching fears.
Oh, thou, whose cold hand tears the veil from error,
Whose hollow eye is our delusion's mirror!
Death, life's chief blessing! At this hour of fate,
Wretch that I am! I see my faults too late.
Perils ill-sought, and crimes ill worth the price,
Pass on in dire review before my eyes;
Yet, thing of dust, and on the verge of night,
Man dares to climb the stars, and on the height
Of heaven his owlet vision dares to bend
From that low earth, where all his hopes descend.
What then avails me in this trying hour,
Or thee, my Italy, this arm of power?
Why did I bid the torch of ravage flame?
Ah! why as with a trumpet's tongue proclaim
The rights of man? confounding wrong and right,
And plunging nations in a deeper night?
Why did I raise of marble to the skies
A gorgeous palace? Vain and empty prize!
When with it lost my air-built dreams must lie
Gulph'd in the Ocean of eternity.
My dearest brother, ah! remember me,
And let my fate avert the like from thee."
He said, and now, its mortal bondage riven,
His spirit fled, and from its higher heaven
Of space look'd down where Rome and Carthage lay,
Thrice blest in having died before the day
Whose wing of havoc swept his race away,
And had not saved by valour vainly shewn
His country's woes, his brother's, and his own.

LORD BYRON.

APPENDIX II.

REFERRING TO THE ESSAY

ON THE POETRY OF PETRARCH.

SECT. IX.

SPECIMENS

OF GREEK LOVE-POETRY

FROM SAPPHO

DOWN TO THE WRITERS

OF THE LOWER EMPIRE.

SAPPHO.

"They who regard the Fragments of Sappho, as mere Love-songs, degrade her genius. Her 'strain' was of a higher mood. Simple, vehement, rich in images, sparing in words, her poetry is the poetry of impulse. In all succeeding poets who have written on Love, we can trace the wit of sentiment, and the finished delicacy of art: in Sappho we have a total unconsciousness of effort; but such is the enthusiasm of her sensations, that she has infused sublimity into the softness of sexual passion. Longinus has instanced her bold selection and association of circumstances in the emotions of violent love as forming the true sublime. He does not, however, specify any peculiarity in the passion described by Sappho, as distinguishing it from a common passion; and yet I am satisfied, that these strong emotions have a deeper source. Persons who have been struck with the disproportion of the effects to the cause, have conceived *jealousy* to be intended; but this seems to me quite an error, into which they have been led by the mention of the man

who is supposed to sit by the girl; for it is supposition only: it is a mere figure, and has not the least appearance of being pointed at any particular lover. It is not the sight of the man, but the smile of the girl that is said to produce this fluttering of the heart: nor is this fainting of the spirits likely to be occasioned by jealousy, which rather engenders a sullen, or malignant temper of mind, and an angry contortion of the countenance. Longinus does not quote the ode as a just description of jealous uneasiness, but of 'amorous furor:' and his expressions are 'All things of this kind happen to those who are in love; but the seizure of the chief particulars, and the embodying of them in one whole, has effected the sublime.' I have no doubt that the passion of which Sappho describes the paroxysm, is a passion indulged by stealth, and concealed through a sense of guilt or apprehension. The first line of the succeeding stanza, which is lost, seems to hint at a disclosure: 'Yet must I venture all:' and I am confirmed in my inference by the traditionary story of the physician who discovered the love of Antiochus for his mother-in-law Stratonice by comparing the effects which her presence produced on his patient, with the symptoms enumerated by Sappho."—ELTON.

SAPPHO.

PHILLIPS'S TRANSLATION.

BLEST as the immortal God is he,
The youth who fondly sits by thee,
And hears and sees thee, all the while,
Softly speak, and sweetly smile.
'Twas this deprived my soul of rest,
And raised such tumults in my breast;
For, while I gazed, in transport tost,
My breath was gone, my voice was lost;
My bosom glow'd; the subtle flame
Ran quick through all my vital frame;
O'er my dim eyes a darkness hung;
My ears with hollow murmurs rung.
In dewy damps my limbs were chill'd;
My blood with gentle horrors thrill'd;
My feeble pulse forgot to play;
I fainted, sunk, and died away.

THE LATTER PART ATTEMPTED MORE LITERALLY.

MY trembling tongue hath lost its power;
Slow, subtle fires my frame devour;
My sight is fled; around me swim
Low dizzy murmurs: every limb
Cold creeping dews o'erspread. I feel
A shivering tremor o'er me steal:
Paler than grass I grow; my breath
Pants in short gasps; I seem like death.

M.

ELTON'S TRANSLATION.

That man is like a god to me,
Who, sitting face to face with thee,
Shall hear thee sweetly speak, and see
Thy laughter's gentle blandishing.
'Tis this astounds my trembling heart;
I see thee, lovely as thou art:
My fluttering words in murmurs start,
My broken tongue is faltering.
My flushing skin the fire betrays
That through my blood electric strays:
My eyes seem darkening as I gaze,
My ringing ears re-echoing.
Cold from my forehead glides the dew:
A shuddering tremor thrills me through;
My cheek a green and yellow hue;
All gasping, dying, languishing.

BOILEAU'S TRANSLATION, AS ALTERED BY DELILLE, WITH THE VIEW OF ADAPTING IT TO THE GREEK METRE.

Heureux celui qui près de toi soupire,
Qui sur lui seul attire ces beaux yeux,
Ces doux accens et ce tendre sourire!
Il est egal aux Dieux.

De veine en veine une subtile flamme
Court dans mon sein sitôt-que je te vois
Et dans le trouble où s'egare mon ame
Je demeure sans voix.

Je n'entends plus, un voile est sur ma vue;
Je rêve et tombe en des douces langueurs
Et sans haleine, interdite, eperdue,
Je tremble, je me meurs.

THIS metre gives no idea of that invented by Sappho. The French translation, moreover, has the defect common to all other versions, not even excepting that of Catullus, of not sufficiently marking the contrasts and gradations of the passion.—The first stanza depicts the ecstacy of a person, who without being lost in the delirium of love, gazes delighted on the charms of a beautiful person. While Sappho is comparing the softer raptures of another with the vehemence of her own passion, she breaks away abruptly, and in the second stanza displays the tumult and sudden transports that seize upon the senses at the sight of the beloved object. In the third stanza, there is less of tumult, but a more glowing ardour and perturbation that pervades the whole frame. In the fourth, the tumult—the ardour—the perturbation, disappear in a languor that approaches the icy chills of dissolution—and from the conclusion of Catullus's imitation, I can have no doubt, that in the remainder of the ode, which is lost, Sappho finished like Phædra in Euripides, by profound reflections upon the misery of desperate love. It appears to me that Phillips has more of Metastasio than of Sappho: the elegance of expression, the smooth flow of sentiment, and the melody of the versification give an air of lifeless monotony in which the fire, the impetuosity, and the spirited strokes of the poetess are nearly lost. Besides, by the use of the past tense he has degraded into cold narration what Sappho, with the true enthusiasm of lyric poetry, sets before us in all the energy and vivacity of the present. Of the thousand Italian trans-

lations of this fragment, I am acquainted with one only which has hit upon the contrasts and gradations of the original, and in which the Sapphic measure has been strictly observed throughout—

Quei parmi in Cielo fra gli Dei, se accanto
Ti siede e vede il tuo bel riso, e sente
I dolci detti e l'amoroso canto!—
A me repente.

Con più tumulto il core urta nel petto;
More la voce, mentre ch'io ti miro,
Su la mia lingua: nelle fauci stretto
Geme il sospiro.

Serpe la fiamma entro il mio sangue, ed ardo:
Un indistinto tintinnio m'ingombra
Gli orecchi, e sogno; mi s'innalza al guardo
Torbida l'ombra.

E tutta molle d'un sudor di gelo,
E smorta in viso come erba che langue,
Tremo e fremo di brividi, ed anelo
Tacita, esangue.

Of all Ovid's poems the Epistle from Sappho to Phaon is the most impassioned and the most poetical. I add some fragments of it as translated by Pope, because I think it very probable, that like all his countrymen, Ovid scrupled not to borrow more largely from the works of this poetess, than even Pope has done from the Latin letters of Heloïse. It is plain

that Ovid goes too much into refinement and detail. Pope frequently descends still more into detail, and here and there adds a colouring of metaphysics, which, by generalizing too much, produces the contrary effect. Nevertheless they were really poets, endowed with vivid feelings, and knew how to preserve in the midst of foreign ornament, that passion which constitutes the native charm of Sappho's poetry—

I BURN, I burn, as when through ripen'd corn
By driving winds the spreading flames are borne!
Phaon to Ætna's scorching fields retires,
While I consume with more than Ætna's fires!
No more my soul a charm in music finds;
Music has charms alone for peaceful minds.
Soft scenes of solitude no more can please,
Love enters there, and I'm my own disease.

The muses teach me all their softest lays,
And the wide world resounds with Sappho's praise.
Though great Alcæus more sublimely sings,
And strikes with bolder rage the sounding strings,
No less renown attends the moving lyre,
Which Venus tunes, and all her loves inspire;
To me what nature has in charms denied,
Is well by wit's more lasting flames supplied.

If to no charms thou wilt thy heart resign,
But such as merit, such as equal thine,
By none, alas! by none thou canst be moved,
Phaon alone by Phaon must be loved!
Yet once thy Sappho could thy cares employ,
Once in her arms you center'd all your joy:

No time the dear remembrance can remove,
For oh! how vast a memory has love!
My music, then, you could for ever hear,
And all my words were music to your ear.
You stopp'd with kisses my enchanting tongue,
And found my kisses sweeter than my song.

And you that rule Sicilia's happy plains,
Have pity, Venus, on your poet's pains!
Shall fortune still in one sad tenor run,
And still increase the woes so soon begun?
Inured to sorrow from my tender years,
My parent's ashes drank my early tears:
My brother next, neglecting wealth and fame,
Ignobly burn'd in a destructive flame:
An infant daughter late my griefs increased,
And all a mother's cares distract my breast.
Alas! what more could fate itself impose,
But thee, the last and greatest of my woes?
No more my robes in waving purple flow,
Nor on my hand the sparkling diamonds glow;
No more my locks in ringlets curl'd diffuse
The costly sweetness of Arabian dews,
Nor braids of gold the varied tresses bind,
That fly disorder'd with the wanton wind:
For whom should Sappho use such arts as these?
He 's gone, whom only she desired to please!

Sure 't was not much to bid one kind adieu,
(At least to feign was never hard to you,)
Farewell, my Lesbian love, you might have said;
Or coldly thus, Farewell, O Lesbian maid!
No tear did you, no parting kiss receive,
Nor knew I then how much I was to grieve.

No lover's gift your Sappho could confer,
And wrongs and woes were all you left with her.

When first I heard (from whom I hardly knew),
That you were fled, and all my joys with you,
Like some sad statue, speechless, pale I stood,
Grief chill'd my breast, and stopp'd my freezing blood;
No sigh to rise, no tear had power to flow,
Fix'd in a stupid lethargy of woe:
But when its way th'impetuous passion found,
I rend my tresses, and my breast I wound;
I rave, then weep: I curse, and then complain;
Now swell to rage, now melt in tears again.

Stung with my love, and furious with despair,
All torn my garments, and my bosom bare,
My woes, thy crimes, I to the world proclaim;
Such inconsistent things are love and shame!
'Tis thou art all my care and my delight,
My daily longing, and my dream by night:
Oh night more pleasing than the brightest day,
When fancy gives what absence takes away,
And, dress'd in all its visionary charms,
Restores my fair deserter to my arms!
Then round your neck in wanton wreath I twine,
Then you, methinks, as fondly circle mine:
A thousand tender words I hear and speak;
A thousand melting kisses, give and take:
Then fiercer joys, I blush to mention these,
Yet, while I blush, confess how much they please.
But when, with day, the sweet delusions fly,
And all things wake to life and joy, but I;
As if once more forsaken, I complain,
And close my eyes to dream of you again;

Then frantic rise, and like some fury rove
Through lonely plains, and through the silent grove,
As if the silent grove, and lonely plains,
That knew my pleasures, could relieve my pains.
In view the grotto, once the scene of love,
The rocks around, the hanging roofs above.

FRAGMENT OF SAPPHO.

PARAPHRASED BY MOORE.

Hither, Venus! queen of kisses,
This shall be the night of blisses!
This the night to friendship dear,
Thou shalt be our Hebe here.

Fill the golden brimmer high,
Let it sparkle like thine eye!
Bid the rosy current gush,
Let it mantle like thy blush!

Venus! hast thou e'er above
Seen a feast so rich in love?
Not a soul that is not mine!
Not a soul that is not thine!

ANACREON.

I WILL also subjoin different translations of an ode of Anacreon, because I consider it one of the few genuine relics of this poet, and a chef-d'œuvre in the art of contrast. These verses would suggest to any painter the picture of an old man seated upon the turf, amidst myrtles and roses, rising under the weight of years by his buoyant gaiety, forgetting past sorrows, and dreaming of pleasures to come. The contrasts in this single personage are further heightened by the figure of Love, who with the levity and curiosity of youth hastens forward to pour out wine for the old man, and listen to his song. But to pourtray the still greater contrast which is produced by the solemnity of the old man's song is beyond the painter's art. For, instead of the praises of pleasure, his theme is the shortness of life, and the long and inevitable sleep of death, whence he deduces the conclusive argument that we must hasten to enjoy the present hour.— It appears to me that translators have not sufficiently availed themselves of these sudden transitions. The ancients were rather intemperate in their use of them; the moderns are too cautious in avoiding them—

COWLEY'S TRANSLATION.

UNDERNEATH the myrtle shade,
On flowery beds supinely laid,
Odorous oils my head o'erflowing,
And around it roses growing;
What shall I do, but drink away
The heat and troubles of the day?
In this more than kingly state,
Love himself shall on me wait.
Fill to me, Love! Nay, fill it up!
And mingled cast into the cup
Wit and mirth, and noble fires,
Vigorous health and gay desires.
The wheel of life no less doth stay
On a smooth than rugged way:
Since it equally doth flee,
Let the motion pleasant be!

MOORE'S TRANSLATION.

STREW me a breathing bed of leaves,
Where Lotus with the myrtle weaves;
And while in luxury's dream I sink,
Let me the balm of Bacchus drink!
In this delicious hour of joy,
Young Love shall be my goblet-boy;
Folding his little golden vest,
With cinctures, round his snowy breast,
Himself shall hover by my side,
And minister the racy tide!

Swift as the wheels that kindling roll,
Our life is hurrying to the goal:
A scanty dust, to feed the wind,
Is all the trace 'twill leave behind.
Why do we shed the rose's bloom
Upon the cold, insensate tomb?
Can flowery breeze, or odour's breath,
Affect the slumbering chill of death?
No, no; I ask no balm to steep
With fragrant tears my bed of sleep:
But now, while every pulse is glowing,
Now let me breathe the balsam flowing;
Now let the rose, with blush of fire,
Upon my brow its scent expire;
And bring the nymph with floating eye,
Oh! she will teach me how to die:
Yes, Cupid! ere my soul retire
To join the blest Elysian choir,
With wine, and love, and blisses dear,
I'll make my own Elysium here!

ELTON'S TRANSLATION.

On beds of tender myrtle leaves,
Where trefoil grass its carpet weaves,
'Tis the passion of my soul
To quaff the health-provoking bowl.

Love, his mantle thrown behind,
With the flag of Nile confin'd,
Shall near me ministering stand,
The heady goblet in his hand.

As the chariot-wheel rolls on
Life runs, and, as it runs, is gone:
Soon to dust our bodies turn:
Our bones are crumbled in an urn.

What avails the perfume thrown
On cold earth, or on a stone?
While I live, let odours flow:
Thick round my brows let roses blow:

Call the mistress of my heart:
Love! ere yet I hence depart,
To join the dance of ghosts below,
I would scatter every woe.

AN ITALIAN TRANSLATION.

Sovra i mirti e fra le rose,
Sovra molli erbe odorose,
Adagiato io voglio ber.
Deh t' annoda al collo il manto,
Bel' Amore! e mentr' io canto,
Corri a farmi da coppier.

Ahi! l'umana vita fugge
Come ruota che si strugge
Più che gira, è sempre va.
Sonno eterno in poca fossa
Su la polvere e fra l' ossa
Il mio corpo dormirà.

A che i balsami e i conforti
Su le tombe? A che su' morti
Tanto vino e tanti fior?
A me il nappo, e la corona
Or ch' io spiro, or che risuona
La mia lira e m'arde il cor.

Vieni e meco ti trastulla;
Qui m' invita la fanciulla
Che sa ridere e trescar.
Ah Cupido! è meglio innanzi
Che fra' morti ignudo io danzi,
Dar gli affanni ai venti e al mar.

FROM ANACREON.

TELL me why, my sweetest dove,
Thus your humid pinions move,
Shedding through the air in showers
Essence of the balmiest flowers?
Tell me whither, whence you rove;
Tell me all, my sweetest dove.
Curious stranger! I belong
To the Bard of Teian song;
With his mandate now I fly
To the nymph of azure eye;
Ah! that eye has madden'd many,
But the poet more than any!
Venus, for a hymn of love,
Warbled in her votive grove,
('Twas in sooth a gentle lay)
Gave me to the Bard away.
See me now his faithful minion,
Thus with softly-gliding pinion,
To his lovely girl I bear
Songs of passion through the air.
Oft he blandly whispers me,
"Soon, my bird, I'll set you free."
But in vain he'll bid me fly,
I shall serve him till I die.
Never could my plumes sustain
Ruffling winds and chilling rain
O'er the plains, or in the dell,
On the mountain's savage swell;

Seeking in the desert wood
Gloomy shelter, rustic food.
Now I lead a life of ease
Far from such retreats as these;
From Anacreon's hands I eat
Food delicious, viands sweet;
Flutter o'er his goblet's brim,
Sip the foamy wine with him.
Then I dance and wanton round
To the lyre's beguiling sound;
Or with gently-fanning wings
Shade the minstrel while he sings:
On his harp then sink in slumbers,
Dreaming still of dulcet numbers!
This is all—away—away—
You have made me waste the day.
How I've chatter'd! prating crow
Never yet did chatter so.

MOORE.

FROM ANACREON.

THOU, whose soft and rosy hues
Mimic form and soul infuse;
Best of painters! come, pourtray
The lovely maid that 's far away.
Far away, my soul! thou art,
But I 've thy beauties all by heart.
Paint her jetty ringlets straying,
Silky twine in tendrils playing;
And, if painting hath the skill
To make the balmy spice distil,
Let every little lock exhale
A sigh of perfume on the gale.
Where her tresses' curly flow
Darkles o'er her brow of snow,
Let her forehead beam to light
Burnished as the ivory bright.
Let her eyebrows sweetly rise
In jetty arches o'er her eyes,
Gently in a crescent gliding,
Just commingling, just dividing.
But hast thou any sparkles warm
The lightning of her eyes to form?
Let them effuse the azure ray
With which Minerva's glances play,
And give them all that liquid fire
That Venus' languid eyes respire.
O'er her nose and cheek be shed
Flushing white and mellow red;

Gradual tints, as when there glows
In snowy milk the bashful rose.
  Then her lip so rich in blisses!
Sweet petitioner for kisses!
Pouting nest of bland persuasion
Ripely suing love's invasion.
  Then beneath the velvet chin,
Whose dimple shades a love within,
Mould her neck with grace descending,
In a heaven of beauty ending;
While airy charms above, below
Sport and flutter on its snow.
  Now let a floating lucid veil
Shadow her limbs, but not conceal;
A charm may peep, a hue may beam
And leave the rest to fancy's dream,
Enough—'tis she! 'tis all I seek;
It glows, it lives, it soon will speak!

MOORE.

FROM ANACREON.

'Twas noon of night, when round the pole
The sullen bear is seen to roll;
And mortals, wearied with the day,
Are slumbering all their cares away:
An infant, at that dreary hour,
Came weeping to my silent bower,
And waked me with a piteous prayer,
To save him from the midnight air!
"And who art thou," I waking cry,
"That bid'st my blissful visions fly?"
"O gentle sire!" the infant said,
"In pity take me to thy shed;
Nor fear deceit: a lonely child
I wander o'er the gloomy wild.
Chill drops the rain, and not a ray
Illumes the drear and misty way!"
I hear the baby's tale of woe;
I hear the bitter night-winds blow;
And sighing for his piteous fate,
I trimm'd the lamp and op'd the gate.
'Twas Love! the little wandering sprite,
His pinion sparkled through the night!
I knew him by his bow and dart;
I knew him by my fluttering heart!
I take him in, and fondly raise
The dying embers' cheering blaze;
Press from his dark and clinging hair
The crystals of the freezing air;
And in my hand and bosom hold
His little fingers thrilling cold.

And now the embers' genial ray
Had warm'd his anxious fears away;
" I pray thee," said the wanton child,
(My bosom trembled as he smil'd,)
" I pray thee let me try my bow,
For through the rain I 've wander'd so,
That much I fear the ceaseless shower
Has injur'd its elastic power."
The fatal bow the victim drew;
Swift from the string the arrow flew;
Oh! swift it flew as glancing flame,
And to my very soul it came!
" Fare thee well," I heard him say,
As laughing wild he wing'd away;
" Fare thee well, for now I know
The rain has not relax'd my bow;
It still can send a madd'ning dart,
As thou shalt own with all thy heart!"

MOORE.

FROM ANTIPATER.

ON THE TOMB OF ANACREON.

Around the tomb, oh bard divine!
Where soft thy hallow'd brow reposes,
Long may the deathless ivy twine,
And summer pour her waste of roses!

And many a fount shall there distil,
And many a rill refresh the flowers;
But wine shall gush in every rill,
And every fount be milky showers.

Thus shade of him whom nature taught
To tune his lyre and soul to pleasure,
Who gave to love his warmest thought,
Who gave to love his fondest measure!

Thus, after death, if spirits feel,
Thou may'st from odours round thee streaming,
A pulse of past enjoyment steal,
And live again in blissful dreaming.

Long may the nymph around thee play,
Eurypyle, thy soul's desire!
Basking her beauties in the ray
That lights thine eyes' dissolving fire!

Sing of her smile's bewitching power,
Her every grace that warms and blesses;
Sing of her brow's luxuriant flower,
The beaming glory of her tresses.

Moore.

FROM PLATO.

TWO FRAGMENTS OF HIS AMATORY POETRY.

I.

Why dost thou gaze upon the sky?
Oh! that I were that spangled sphere,
And every star should be an eye,
To wonder on thy beauties here!

II.

In life thou wert my morning star,
But now that death has stol'n thy light,
Alas! thou shinest dim and far
Like the pale beam that weeps at night.

MOORE.

FROM EURIPIDES.

THE DIRGE OF A LOVER.

FAREWELL to revel and the festive throng,
To wanton garlands, dance, and social song!
Henceforth to me, sweet instruments, be mute!
The harp's wild raptures, and the Lydian flute,
All that was pleasure once, my thoughts resign,
For all my joys are buried in thy shrine.

I'll have thee moulded as in life, and bear
To my lone couch thy image sadly dear;
Fall on the semblance, clasp it in my arms,
Name it from thee, and, circling fancied charms,
Gaze on the fair deceit, nor e'er forsake
The death-cold statue, till it seems to wake.

Poor comfort! but in trifles light as these
My aching heart shall idly ask for ease.
Yet in the dead still hour of night arise,
When troubled phantoms flit before my eyes,
Thou shalt not fright me, but my senses close
In dreams of gentleness and lost repose.

Vain, idle thoughts! In those sad realms await
Thy lover's coming when released by fate;
One common mansion for our shades prepare,
That our rent loves may join eternal there:
And when I die, to friendship I entrust
In one small urn to mix our kindred dust.

BLAND.

FROM THEOCRITUS.

THE GOATHERD.

Sweet Amarillis! why no longer laid
At all thy length, beneath this cave's cool shade?
Do you not lisp me fondly, as of late,
Your little love? or am I, now, your hate?
Oh! would I might become a humming bee
To pierce the grot, invisible to thee;
Creep midst the fillet that thy hair inweaves,
And whisper through its fern and ivy-leaves!
Now know I love: a cruel God, who press'd
With sucking lips the lioness's breast;
Rear'd by that mother in some savage wood,
He thrills my marrow; he consumes my blood.
Oh gem! oh soft-eyed maid, of blackest brow,
Thy clinging arms around thy shepherd throw:
That he thy pouting lips may closely kiss;
E'en in an empty kiss there breathes of bliss.

Elton.

FROM BION.

THE DEATH OF ADONIS.

I MOURN Adonis: mourn the loves around:
Ah! cruel, cruel is that bleeding wound:
Yet Venus feels more agonizing smart;
A deeper wound has pierced within her heart.
Around the youth his hounds in howlings yell;
And shriek the nymphs from every mountain dell:
Venus, herself, among the forest-dales,
Unsandal'd, strews her tresses to the gales:
The wounding brambles, bent beneath her tread,
With sacred blood-drops of her feet are red:
She through the lengthening valleys shrieks, and cries,
"See where my young Assyrian bridegroom lies!"
But round his navel black the life-blood flow'd;
His snowy breast and side with purple glow'd.

Ah! Venus! ah! the Loves for thee bewail;
With that lost youth thy fading graces fail;
Her beauty bloom'd, while life was in his eyes;
Ah, woe! with him it bloom'd, with him it dies——
And Venus o'er each solitary hill,
And through wide cities, chaunts her dirges shrill.
Woe, Venus! woe! Adonis is no more:
Echoes repeat the lonely mountains o'er,
"Adonis is no more:" Woe, woe is me!
Who at her grievous love dry-eyed can be?
Mute at th' intolerable wound she stood:
And saw, and knew the thigh dash'd red with blood:

Groaning she stretch'd her arms: and " stay!" she said,
" Stay, poor Adonis!—lift thy languid head:
Ah! let me find thy last expiring breath,
Mix lips with lips, and suck thy soul in death.
Wake but a little, for a last, last kiss:
Be it the last, but warm with life, as this;
That through my lips I may thy spirit drain,
Suck thy sweet breath; drink love through every vein:
This kiss shall serve me ever in thy stead;
Since thou thyself, unhappy one! art fled.——
Disconsolate I mourn Adonis dead,
With tears unsated, and thy name I dread.
Oh thrice belov'd! thou now art dead and gone!
And all my sweet love, like a dream, is flown.
Venus sinks lonely on a widow'd bed:
The loves with listless feet my chamber tread:
My cestus perish'd with thyself!"——

ELTON.

FROM MOSCHUS.

ON THE DEATH OF BION.

Sicilian Muses, pour the dirge of woe:
The swallows, nightingales, that wont to know
His pipe with joy, whose throats he taught to sing,
Perch'd on the branches, made their dirges ring:
All other birds replied from all the grove;
And ye too mourn, oh every woodland dove!

Sicilian Muses, pour the dirge of woe:
Who, dear-beloved! thy silent flute shall blow?
What hardy lip shall thus adventurous be?
Thy lip has touch'd the pipe; it breathes of thee:
Mute echo, too, has caught the warbled sound
In whispering reeds, that vocal tremble round:
I bear the pipe to Pan: yet, haply, he
May fear the trial, lest eclipsed by thee.

Sicilian Muses, pour the dirge of woe:
The tears of pensive Galatea flow,
Missing thy song, which on her ear would glide
When on the sea-shore sitting by thy side:
Unlike the Cyclops' music was thy lay,
For she from him disdainful fled away;
She from the beacon look'd on thee serene,
And now, forgetful of the watery scene,
Still on the desert sands, beside the brine,
She feeds the wandering herds, that late were thine.

Sicilian Muses, pour the dirge of woe:
Whatever gifts the Muses could bestow,
Are dead with thee; whate'er the damsels gave
Of sweet-lipp'd kisses, buried in thy grave.
Around the sepulchre the Loves deplore
Their loss: and Venus, shepherd! loves thee more
Than the soft kiss, which late she bent to sip
From dying fragrance of Adonis' lip.

ELTON.

FROM THE ANTHOLOGY.

FLY, my beloved, to yonder stream,
We'll plunge us from the noontide beam!
Then cull the roses' humid bud,
And dip it in our goblet's flood.
Our age of bliss, my nymph, shall fly,
As sweet, though passing, as that sigh,
Which seems to whisper o'er your lip,
Come, while you may, of rapture sip.
For age will steal the rosy form,
And chill the pulse which trembles warm!
And death—alas! that hearts which thrill
Like your's and mine, should e'er be still!

MOORE.

FROM APOLLONIUS RHODIUS.

MEDEA.

THEN was the virgin's heart, within her breast,
Turn'd to and fro. The tear compassionate
Stole trickling from her eyes, and inward grief
Prey'd with slow wasting on her pining frame:
Such weight of suffering did her sleepless love
Lay on her bosom. Now her will resolves
To gift the chief with drugs of charming power:
Now she abjures the thought; and she will die
Together with the man she loves. Anon
Her resolutions change; nor will she die
With him she loves, nor yield the charming drugs;
But calm with unresisting apathy,
Bear with his fate. Then sitting, while her thoughts
Waver'd in musing doubt, aloud she spake:
"Still am I wretched with a choice of ills!
My mind is impotent of thought: no cure
For this, the torment irresistible
That evermore consumes me. Would to heaven
That I had fallen by Dian's nimble darts,
Ere I had seen him! ere my sister's sons
Had gone for Greece, whence some unfriendly God
Or fury, brings these lamentable woes;
Then let him fight, and perish, if his fate
Decree that he shall die upon the field.
How should I shun my parents' eyes, and mix
The needful drugs? what speech can serve my turn?

What fraud shall aid me, or what secret wile?
Shall I, apart from his companions, see
The chief alone, and interchange kind words?
Wretch that I am! for if indeed he die,
How could I hope a respite from my woes?
Then were my sum of misery full, if he
Were reft of life. Away with modesty!
Away with decent forms! and let him go,
Saved by my counsels, wheresoe'er he list.
And then, on that same day when he achieves
The combat, let me die: to yon high beam,
Let me, suspended by the throat, expire;
Or drain the juices, that destroy the soul.
Yet men will cast reproaches, after life,
Upon my breathless body: and, from far,
Shall the whole city cry aloud, and rail
Upon my death; and here and there will throng
The Colchian women, and pursue with taunts
My memory. 'This maiden's heart was wrapt
'So deeply in a stranger, that for him
'She died; and stain'd her parents, and her house,
'To love-sick frenzy yielding up herself.'
What shame will not be mine? oh, misery!
Were it not better now, this very night,
Here in my chamber, to forsake my life?
So, by a sudden death, to 'scape at once
All this reproach; before my deeds have wrought
This foul disgrace, unworthy of a name!"
She said, and to her casket went, full stored
With drugs: some healthful, some of deadly bane.
She placed it on her knees, and wept; the tears
Unceasing bathed her bosom; flowing forth,
Spite of herself, abundantly, for grief

Of her hard fate. And now the impulse rose,
To cull, and taste the drugs that poison life.
She loosed the casket's fastenings; with ill hap
Gathering the mortal herbs, when suddenly,
Came o'er her mind a horror of the grave.
Long time she mused in doubt: life's pleasing cares,
In smiling vision flitted on her sight:
She thought upon the pleasures that are found
Among the living; she remember'd her
Of the gay playmates of her virgin hours—
But when the Virgin saw the morning light
Gay-glittering round, she with her hands bound up
The tresses of her yellow hair, that flow'd
Loose in disorder down: she ting'd her cheeks,
Which tears had sullied, with cosmetic red;
O'er her smooth body shed a shining oil,
That breathed nectarean odour; and enrobed
Her form in elegant cymar, whose folds
Were gather'd at the waist with pliant clasps;
And a tiara, silver-tissued, placed
Upon her fragrant head: so walking forth
She paced the palace, with elastic step
Treading the floor: of present ills alike
Forgetful, and of greater yet behind.

* * * * * *

No other theme employ'd Medea's mind,
Though singing; nor could all her sportive maids
Whatever carol they alternate sang,
Long please her: she, still absent, in the song
Broke off abrupt. Nor on the damsels round
Look'd she with stedfast eyes; but turn'd them still
To the far paths, and ever lean'd her cheek,

Inclining forward; and a shock was felt
Quick at her heart, if e'er she listening caught
A foot-fall's echo, or the passing wind.
But soon he came; and to the longing maid
Appear'd high-bounding: as the Syrian star,
Emerged from ocean, rises, beautiful
And glorious to behold; yet to the flocks
Sends forth wide-wasting plagues. Thus Jason came
Thus beautiful in aspect; but his sight
Raised agonized emotion, and her heart
Sank; her eyes darken'd; and the reddening blood
Rush'd to her cheek; nor could her faltering knees
Advance, nor yet recede; and, under her,
Her feet seem'd rooted to the earth. Anon
The damsels left them, and retired apart.
Thus, opposite each other, mute they stood:
As oaks, or fir-trees tall, nigh-growing, lift,
Upon the mountains, their firm-rooted stems
In quietness, when not a breath of air
Is stirring in the leaves; anon, with gusts
Of rushing wind are shaken to and fro
With deep tumultuous murmur; so the breath
Of love would stir within them, and their tongues
Flow with no stinted utterance. Jason felt
The virgin tremble with her heaven-sent grief,
And, soft in blandishment, address'd her thus:
" Why dost thou fear me, maiden, thus alone?"

* * * * * * *

So said the youth, with admiration high
Gilding his speech; but she, her eyes cast down,
Smiled with enchanting sweetness; all her soul
Melted within her, of his words of praise

Enamour'd. Then she fix'd full opposite
Her eyes upon him, at a loss what word
She first should speak, yet wishing in a breath
To utter all her fond impetuous thoughts.
And, with spontaneous act, she took the drug
From forth her fragrant girdle's folds, and he
Received it at her hands, elate with joy:
And she had drawn the spirit from her breast,
Had he but ask'd it; sighing out her soul
Into his bosom. So from Jason's head
Waving with yellow locks, love lighten'd forth
A lambent flame, and snatch'd the darted rays
That trembled from his eyes. Her inmost soul
Floating in bliss, she all dissolved away;
As dew on roses in the morning's beams
Evaporating melts. So stood they both;
And bent, in bashfulness, their eyes on earth,
Then glanced them on each other; while their brows
Smiled joyous, in serenity of love.

ELTON.

FROM MELEAGER.

CHARMS OF THE SEX.

Oh locks, that Damo's forehead wreathe!
Oh Heliodora's sandal'd feet!
And oh Timarion's doors, that breathe
Moist odours from her chamber sweet;
Oh Anticlea's smiles, that shed
A tender luxury of light;
Oh fillet! blooming fresh to sight
On Dorothea's flower-twined head!
Love! not thy golden quiver hides,
In close reserve, the winged dart;
Each arrow through my vital glides;
I feel, I feel them in my heart. Elton.

FROM DIONYSIUS.

I wish I could like Zephyr steal
To wanton o'er thy mazy vest:
And thou wouldst ope thy bosom-veil
And take me panting to thy breast!

I wish I might a rose-bud grow,
And thou wouldst cull me from the bower
And place me on that breast of snow,
Where I should bloom, a wintry flower.

I wish I were the lily's leaf
To fade upon that bosom warm;
There I should wither, pale and brief,
The trophy of thy fairer form! Moore.

PAULUS SILENTIARIUS.

THE OFFERING OF A DESERTED LOVER.

To THEE the reliques of a thousand flowers,
Torn from the chaplet twined in gayer hours;
To thee the goblet carved with skill divine,
Erewhile that foam'd with soul-subduing wine;

The locks, now scatter'd on the dusty ground,
Once dropping odours, and with garlands crown'd,
Outcast of pleasure, and of hope bereft,
Lais! to thee, thy Corydon has left.

Oft on thy threshold stretch'd at close of day,
He wept and sigh'd the cheerless night away,
Nor dared invoke thy name, nor dared aspire
To melt thy bosom with his amorous fire.

Alas! alas! now cold and senseless grown,
These last sad offerings make his sorrows known,
And dare upbraid those scornful charms that gave
His youth unpitied to the cheerless grave.

FROM PHILODEMUS.

PRAYER TO VENUS.

My Helen is little and brown; but more tender
Than the cygnet's soft down, or the plumage of doves;
And her form, like the ivy, is graceful and slender,
Like the ivy entwined round the tree that it loves.

Her voice—not thy cestus, oh Goddess of pleasure,
Can so melt with desire or with ecstasy burn;
Her kindness unbounded, she gives without measure
To her languishing lover, and asks no return.

Such a girl is my Helen—then never, ah never,
Let my amorous heart, mighty Venus, forget her;
Oh grant me to keep my sweet mistress for ever;
—For ever—at least, till you send me a better!

MERIVALE.

APPENDIX III. IV.

REFERRING TO THE ESSAY ON THE

POETRY OF PETRARCH,

SECT. XIII.

A THEORY OF LOVE

BY LORENZO DE' MEDICIS,

AND COMPARATIVE DESCRIPTIONS

OF FEMALE BEAUTY

ACCORDING TO THE PLATONIC NOTIONS,

BY THE EARLY ITALIAN POETS.

THEORY OF LOVE BY LORENZO DE' MEDICIS,

PREFIXED TO HIS AMATORY POETRY.

With justice might I be blamed, had I been so richly gifted by nature, as to make it easy for me to perform every action in a perfect manner; but this pre-eminence has been granted to very few, and even to these only on very rare occasions during their lives: whence upon considering the frailty of humanity, and being bound for safety's sake to confine ourselves to the common condition of mankind, and the constant practice of the world, I think those actions are to be preferred which give rise to the fewest evils.

Now Love is so far from being reprehensible, that, on the contrary, it is the surest indication of a noble and lofty mind; and a special cause that allures and excites men to the active practice of the virtues which dwell in the soul. Whoever seeks for the true definition of love, discovers it to be only—A DESIRE OF THE BEAUTIFUL.—And if this be the case, vice and deformity, in every shape, must be disgusting to him who truly loves. Beauty of countenance and mind is the principle and guide, which leads man to seek for beauty in other objects, to mount up to virtue, which is beauty half earthly, half divine, and come at last to repose in the sovereign beauty, that is, God.

THE conditions which appear necessarily to belong to a true, exalted, and worthy love, are two:—First, To LOVE BUT ONE—Second, To LOVE THIS ONE ALWAYS. Not many lovers have hearts so generous as to be capable of fulfilling these two conditions; and exceedingly few women display sufficient attractives to withhold men from the violation of them; yet without these there is no true love. For in addition to natural charms, there must be found in the person beloved, talent, accomplishments, propriety of behaviour, elegant manners, a graceful presence, suavity of speech, good sense, love, constancy, and fidelity.

BEAUTY and the eyes first give birth to love; but other endowments are necessary for its preservation. Because, should sickness, or other accidents discolour the cheek, or early beauty fade away in age, the gifts of mind remain and are not less dear to the heart, than beauty to the eye, and pleasure to the senses. The senses, it is true, open the door to love, but afterwards the soul must cherish it like a hallowed fire, must refine and purify it by degrees, and feed on it. And yet these estimable qualities may not be enough, unless the lover possess sensibility of heart to discern them, and elevation and generosity of soul to appreciate them. But when the above-mentioned conditions meet in two enamoured persons—she becomes more beautiful of soul, more wise, more happy in her affections—and he, to please her ever more and more, must, in all his actions, endeavour to excel in virtue, and beautify his soul, that he may emulate the moral and corporeal graces of his mistress.

THE SAME THEORY

ILLUSTRATED BY SHAKSPEARE.

SONNET CXVI.

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove;
O no! it is an ever-fixed mark
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wandering bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come;
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom;
If this be error, and upon me prov'd,
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

GUIDO CAVALCANTI.

Chi è questa che vien che ogni uom la mira!
Che fa tremar di caritate l' a're?
E mena seco Amor, sì che parlare
Null'uom ne puote; ma ciascun sospira?

Ahi Dio! che sembra quando gli occhi gira!
Dicalo Amor, ch'io nol saprei contare:
Cotanto d'umiltà donna mi pare,
Che ciascun'altra inver di lei chiam'ira.

Non si porria contar la sua piacenza;
Che a lei s'inchina ogni gentil virtute,
E la Beltate per sua Dea la mostra.

Non è si alta già la mente nostra,
E non s'è posta in noi tanta salute
Che propriamente n'abbiam conoscenza.

LITERAL TRANSLATION.

Who is this—that all men gaze on her as she approaches?—who makes the very air tremble with soft affection?—who comes, with Love by her side—and in whose presence none can speak, but only sigh? Heaven! what a sight is displayed when she moves her eyes! Let Love himself describe it, for I am quite unable. She is alone the lady of gentleness—compared with whom, all others seem rude and fierce. Her sweet and graceful action none can relate. To her every lofty virtue bows the head; and beauty points to her as her own goddess. The mind of man is not created so high, nor is divine grace so implanted within us, that we are capable of attaining the true knowledge of all her perfections.

DANTE ALIGHIERI.

Negli occhi porta la mia Donna Amore,
Perchè si fa gentil ciò ch' ella mira:
Ov' ella passa ogni uom ver lei si gira:
E cui salute fa tremar lo core,

Sì che bassando il viso tutto smuore,
Ed ogni suo difetto allor sospira:
Fugge dinanzi a lei superbia ed ira;
Ajutatemi, donne, a farle onore.

Ogni dolcezza, ogni pensiero umile
Nasce nel core a chi parlar la sente.
Ond' è beato chi prima la vide:

Quel ch' ella par quando un poco sorride
Non si può dire nè tenere a mente;
Sì è nuovo miracolo e gentile!

LITERAL TRANSLATION.

In the eyes of my mistress, Love is seated, for they ennoble every thing she looks upon. Where she passes, men turn and gaze; and whomsoever she salutes, his heart trembles; the colour forsakes his downcast face, and he sighs for all his unworthiness. Pride and anger fly before her. Assist me, ladies, to do her honour! All gentleness, all thoughts of love and kindness, spring in the hearts of those who hear her speak, so that it is very blessedness first to behold her. But when she faintly smiles, it passes both utterance and conception; so wondrous is the miracle, and so gracious!

FRANCESCO PETRARCA.

In qual parte del Cielo, in quale Idea
Era l' esempio onde Natura tolse
Quel bel viso leggiadro in ch' ella volse
Mostrar quaggiù quanto lassù potea?

Qual Ninfa in fonti, in selve mai qual Dea
Chiome d' oro sì fine all' aura sciolse?
Quando un cor tante in sè virtuti accolse?
Benchè la somma è di mia morte rea!

Per divina bellezza indarno mira,
Chi gli occhi di costei giammai non vide
Come soavemente ella gli gira;

Non sa come Amor sana e come ancide,
Chi non sa come dolce ella sospira
E come dolce parla e dolce ride.

LITERAL TRANSLATION.

In what region of heaven, in what world of idea, was the model whence Nature drew that fair and beautiful face, meaning to display here below the utmost extent of her powers above? What nymph of fountains, what goddess of the woods, ever let float upon the breeze tresses of such pure gold? When have so many virtues met in a single breast?—even though the chief of all her perfections is guilty of my death! He looks in vain for divine beauty, who never sees her eyes, whenever she turns them sweetly round. He knows not how love wounds, and heals, who knows not how she sweetly sighs, and sweetly speaks, and sweetly smiles.

GIUSTO DE' CONTI.

Chi è costei, che nostra etate adorna
Di tante meraviglie e di valore?
E in forma umana in compagnia d'Amore
Fra noi mortali come Dea soggiorna?

Di senno e di beltà dal Ciel s'adorna
Qual spirto ignudo e sciolto d'ogni errore;
E per destin la degna a tanto onore
Natura, che a mirarla pur ritorna.

In lei quel poco lume è tutto accolto
E quel poco splendor che a' giorni nostri
Sovra noi cade da benigne stelle;

Tal che 'l Maestro de' stellati chiostri
Si lauda, rimirando nel bel volto;
Che fè già di sua man cose sì belle.

LITERAL TRANSLATION.

Who is she that so adorns our age with the graces of her rare perfections?—who, like a goddess in a human form, sojourns among us mortals, with Love for her companion? with sense and beauty alike derived from heaven, she seems a pure spirit, divested of all earthly error; and Nature, who destined her to such exalted honour, turns back to contemplate the wonder she has wrought. Whatever gleams of light and splendour the benignant planets vouchsafe to shed upon this world of ours, all are centered in her; so that the Divine Master of the starry spheres applauds himself when he beholds her beauty, well pleased that his Almighty hands have formed an object so worthy of adoration.

APPENDIX V. VI.

REFERRING TO THE ESSAY ON

THE POETRY OF PETRARCH, SECT, XV.

TO THE ESSAY ON HIS CHARACTER, SECT. I.

AND TO THE PARALLEL, SECT. XVI.

LETTERS

OF PETRARCH AND DANTE,

FROM THEIR MANUSCRIPTS.

Petrarch's hand-writing as in the Letters in the possession of Lord Holland

Reu: & Amplissime Presul Jacobe Domine precolendissime: Me invitat ad Augustam a Natalibus a la Corte Romana con grandissime speranze. E se lo affetto amorevolissimo di Voi el non me fosse a mille altre dimostranze cognosciuto, potrei affermar essermi Vo. el più ale nemici, che el misero Francesco potesse havere al Mondo. El fa per le cose che ha

En Val: clusa x. Kal: Junij M. cccxxxviii

Tui studiosissimus: Franc: Petrarch

Reuce: & Amplis: Presul Jacobe Domine precolendissime: Io gode assai bene, perche Vi porto affetto, en la qual mi haurete potuto fare grande noia, quando el tempo recapir le mie compositione: ni da altrui segretamente disgiunto, impercioche pensi essermi molto en grato el mio honore, el che non potria essermi non me amassi. El sappiate ordinemus per nostro consulo, che Jacobe

Neapoli VIII Kal: Aprilis M. cccxlv.

Tibi & voluntate, & debito
Devotissimus F. Petrarch

Præstantissime Willhelme fœlicitatem. Et quid boni Deus? quid tam diuturnum sibi unte si: lentium? quid isthic agas? nam bene valeas præterreo me latere. Verùm bene valere Te supe: rem. Cetera aliquando mihi optata sicut exopto. Jamé Fr. tibi aliàs iucundissimus memoria excidi? Cum poteris scribe. Animetum communicatione alicuius amicitiæ. Amo præstantiam tam

Auenione III Kal Maii M cccxl.

F Petrarch

The original letters of Petrarch in MS. from which the above plates were taken, have been lost or mislaid. They were and are still the property of the Rt Hon Lord Holland. Any person meeting with them who will deliver them to Mr Murray Albemarle Street or to Bt Cottrell Esq: No 2 Great George Street Westminster will be suitably rewarded.

PETRARCH'S LETTERS IN ITALIAN,

TRANSCRIBED FROM THE ORIGINALS

IN THE POSSESSION OF LORD HOLLAND.

Rev.et Amplissimo Præsuli Lamboziensi Jacomo Columnio, Dom. perhonorando, Avenionem.

Rev. et amplissime Præsul, Domine perhonorande. Me invitate en Avignone a trattenerme a la Corte Romana con gonfiarme di speciosissime speranze. E se lo effetto amorevolissimo di voi non me fosse a mille altre dimostranze cognosciuto potrei affermare esserme voi el più rio nemico che el misero Francesco potesse avere al mondo. El sà per lo tantō che haviamo più fiate favellato onsieme, le grandi promissioni fattemi dal Pontefice Giovanne, a modo io me lusingava essere ben tosto en qualche stato sublime ; e poi me cognosco essere el tapino Petrarca che sempre fui, el saro. Ben el sapete voi con la longa experientia quanto le sono fallaci et fraudolente le lusinghe de la Corte, anzi che en quella li huomini ben veduti sono li ribaldi, o li idioti, o somigliante schiuma de gente, che o per simonia, favori, o adulatione, el montano a li gradi e le dignitade. O Tempora, O mores ! El mi torrei a vituperio per queste non licite vie conseguire cosa di buono. Hor puote esser dunque che voi Misser Jacomo che el siete ingenuo et virtuoso Signore el me proponiate che

io faccia ritorno en la Corte, dove non che uno che el se professa homo dabbene, ma lo sia punto iudicioso si torrebbe a gran vergogna dimorare ove no el costrengesse el bisogno? Præterea quando ben ancora el fosse certo haver a conseguire cosa di buono da la munificentia del Papa, li vitii scelerati de la Corte, el me sono così a noia che al sol pensarli el me fa stomaco. Sappia che en partirme da la Corte del Papa cantai il Psalmo: 'In exitu Israel de Ægypto.' Godo en queste amene solitudini de Valclusa una dolce et imperturbata tranquillità, el virtuoso e placidissimo otio de miei studj; el tempo che mi vaca de le volte passo a Cabrieres per diportarme. Ah! se vi fosse licito Misser Jacomo el dimorare en la dicta Valle di certo vi rincrescereste di tutto el Mondo, non che de la Corte del Papa. Son fermo en la deliberatione di non più rivederla. Me commendi en buona gratia de le excellente Signor Misser Stephano Colonna, vostro padre, et di Misser el Cardinale, vostro virtuoso fratello, et conservatemi el vostro cordiale affecto. Vale. En Valclusa.

Kal. Junii MCCCXXXVIII.

Tui Studiosissimus,

FRANC. PETRARCA.

A TRANSLATION OF THIS LETTER IS INSERTED IN THE ESSAY ON THE CHARACTER OF PETRARCH, SECT. I.

Rev. et Amplissime Domine Præsul Jacob, Domine perhonorande.

Jo godo assai ben perche voi per lo affecto en le quale mi avete, patiate si grave noia, quando el sentite carpite le mie compositioni da alcuno ignorantello disgratiato: imperciochè penso asserve molto en grado el mio honore el che non poteria essere se non me amassivo: Sappiate non di meno per vostro consuolo che jo de el garrire de le stridule cicade non ricevo più rincrescimento che el senta la Luna quando un rabbioso mastino con isquarciata gola latra contro de ella. Se ho voluto imitare el primo verso de la canzone de Arnaldo Danielo Provenzale,

" Drez et raison es que je cante de Amour,"

mutilandolo en parte, el feci cosi poi che entiero non faceva al mio proposito; e per la dicta cagione me sono servito di quello parlare solo en quello che me bisognava. Se li miserelli el sapessero la differentia tra lo imitare, el prender di netto, così sconciamente non cicaleriano. Ma io me consolo con el detto de M. Tullio, " Vera laus fit à laudato viro." Hor pensate voi præstantissimo Messer Jacopo se el me ponno le costoro ineptie et cicalecci portar duolo. El me rincresce pur assai che el nostro virtuosissimo M. Bernardo el sia molestato da el suo consueto male, come voi me ne date aviso con la vostra lictera: Homo così excellente el fora dovere che non patisce male alcuno, se così el fosse en piacere de Iddio. El salute a nome mio, et sappia che molto me duole de ello. El ve prego

ad excusarme appresso el Reverendiss. Card. M. Joanne, vostro fratello, de el non haver data opera en trovar el libro che el me disse; impercioche, en questi pochi momenti che ho dimorato appresso el Serenissimo Rè Roberto non sono stato niente mio, e volendo partire per Roma, non me ha vacato el salutare alcuno amico. Me commenda en gratia de lo excell. M. Stephano, vostro honoratissimo Padre, et Franciscum tuum tuis iucundissimis epistolis exhilarare non desinas. Vale. Neapol. VIII. Kal. April MCCCXLI.

Tibi de voluntate et debito deditissimus,

F. PETRARCA.

TRANSLATION.

Reverend and most dignified Prelate, James Colonna, my very honoured Lord.

It is delightful to me to receive such an undoubted proof of your affectionate regard for me, as appears from the displeasure you feel in hearing my compositions criticised by some poor wretched ignorant creature; for you would not take so warm an interest in what concerns my honour, if you did not love me sincerely. Know then, for your comfort, that I feel no more disturbed with the shrill tones of those chirping crickets, than the moon does at the loud baying of a furious wide-mouthed mastiff. If I really had any intention to imitate the first verse of the Provençal Poet, Arnaldo Danielo,

"Drez et raison es que je cante de Amour,"

it was only to imitate it in part, because an imitation of the whole did not suit my purpose; and for that

very reason I made use of his own proper words, but only so far as was necessary for my purpose. If these poor wretches could conceive the difference between an imitation and an absolute plagiarism, they would not hold such idle and extravagant language as they now do. But my comfort is in the words of Cicero, "Vera laus fit à laudato viro." Conceive, therefore, my dear and excellent friend, if these idle chatterings can give me uneasiness for a single moment. It is a matter of real concern to me to learn from your letter that our worthy and admirable friend Messer Bernardo is tormented with his old complaint. So excellent a man ought not, if such were the will of Heaven, to suffer any grievance whatever. Remember me kindly to him, and assure him of the pain I feel on his account. I beg you also to make an apology on my part to the Reverend Cardinal John, your brother, for not having endeavoured to find the book he pointed out to me. The reason for the omission was this: in the very short time I passed with the Most Serene King Robert, I was never for a single moment my own master; and when I proposed returning to Rome, I had not sufficient time left to take leave of any of my friends. Be so good, in my name, most respectfully to salute your excellent and honoured father, Messer Stephen Colonna, and continue, as usual, to exhilarate your old friend Francis with your delightful letters. Farewell.

Naples, 8th Calends of April, 1341.

From inclination as well as duty,

Your most devoted Friend,

FRANCIS PETRARCA.

A LETTER OF DANTE'S

From the Original

IN THE LAURENTIAN LIBRARY AT FLORENCE
PLUTEUM XXIX. CODEX VIII. FOL. 123.

In licteris vestris et reverentia debita et affectione receptis, quam repatriatio mea cure sit vobis ex animo, grata mente ac diligenti animaversione concepi. etenim tanto me districtius obligastis, quanto rarius exules invenire amicos contingit. ad illam vero significata respondeo, et si non eatenus qualiter forsam pusillanimitas appeteret aliquorum, ut sub examine vestri consilii sit ante judicium, affectuose deposco. ecce igitur quod per licteras vestri meique nepotis necnon aliorum quamplurimum amicorum significatum est mihi per ordinamentum nuper factum florentie *(sic)* super absolutione bannitorum, quod si solvere vellem certam pecunie *(sic)* quantitatem vellemque pati notam oblationis et absolvi possem et redire at presens *(sic)*. in quo quidem duo ridenda et male perconsiliata sunt. Pater, dico male perconsiliata per illos qui talia expresserunt. nam vestre litere *(sic)* discretius et consultius clausulate nicil de talibus continebant. estne ista revocatio gloriosa qua d. all. (i. e. *Dantes Alighierius)* revocatur ad patriam per trilustrium fere perpessus exilium? hecne *(sic)* meruit conscientia manifesta quibuslibet? hec sudor et labor continuatus in studiis? absit a viro philosophie *(sic)* domestico temeraria terreni

cordis humilitas, ut more cujusdam cioli et aliorum, infamia quasi vinctus ipse se patiatur offerri. absit a viro predicante justitiam, ut purpessus injuriam inferentibus, velut benemerentibus, pecuniam suam solvat. non est hec *(sic)* via redeundi ad patriam, pater mi, sed si alia per vos, aut deinde per alios invenietur que fame *(sic)* d. *(Dantis)* que onori non deroget, illam non lentis passibus acceptabo. quod si per nullam talem florentia introitur, nunquam florentiam introibo. quidni? nonne solis astrorumque specula ubique conspiciam? nonne dulcissimas veritates potero speculari ubique sub celo *(sic)* ni prius inglorium, imo ignominiosum populo, florentineque civitati me reddam? quippe panis non deficiet.

A TRANSLATION OF THIS LETTER IS INSERTED IN THE PARALLEL, SECT. XVI.

APPENDIX VII.

TRANSLATIONS

FROM PETRARCH,

BY

BARBARINA LADY DACRE.

TO A FRIEND.

The brook, soft rippling on its pebbled way,
With many a winding fondly lingers long
In valleys low, stealing wild weeds among,
And pendant boughs that o'er its surface play;

Its humble pride still to reflect the gay
And varied flowers that round its mirror throng;
So I, erewhile, lone warbled my rude song,
Echoing Valclusa's sad melodious lay:

And as, lured forth along the unsheltered plain,
The little stream at length, with bolder course,
Bears tributary waters to the main;

I, too, though late, to thee my offering bear,
Advent'rous, won by Friendship's gentle force
From covert shades, the broader light to dare.

CANZONE.

Nella stagion che'l ciel rapido inchina
Verso occidente, e che'l dì nostro vola
A gente che di là forse l'aspetta;
Veggendosi in lontan paese sola
La stanca vecchiarella pellegrina
Raddoppia i passi, e più e più s'affretta;
E poi così soletta
Al fin di sua giornata
Talor è consolata
D'alcun breve riposo, ov'ella obblia
La noia e'l mal della passata via.
Ma lasso! ogni dolor che'l dì m'adduce
Cresce, qualor s'invia
Per partirsi da noi l'eterna luce.

Come'l sol volge le 'nfiammate rote
Per dar luogo alla notte, onde discende
Dagli altissimi monti maggior l'ombra;
L'avaro zappador l'arme riprende,
E con parole e con alpestri note
Ogni gravezza del suo petto sgombra:
E poi la mensa ingombra
Di povere vivande,
Simili a quelle ghiande
Le qua'fuggendo tutto'l mondo onora.
Ma chi vuol si rallegri ad ora ad ora;
Ch'i'pur non ebbi ancor, non dirò lieta,
Ma riposata un'ora,
Nè per volger di ciel nè di pianeta.

CANZONE.

In the still evening, when with rapid flight
Low in the western sky the sun descends
To give expectant nations life and light;
The aged pilgrim, in some clime unknown
Slow journeying, right onward fearful bends
With weary haste, a stranger and alone;
Yet, when his labour ends,
He solitary sleeps,
And in short slumber steeps
Each sense of sorrow hanging on the day,
And all the toil of the long-passed way:
But oh! each pang, that wakes with morn's first ray,
More piercing wounds my breast
When Heaven's eternal light sinks crimson in the West.

His burning wheels when downward Phœbus bends
And leaves the world to night, its lengthened shade
Each towering mountain o'er the vale extends;
The thrifty peasant shoulders light his spade,
With sylvan carol gay and uncouth note
Bidding his cares upon the wild winds float,
Content in peace to share
His poor and humble fare,
As in that golden age
We honour still, yet leave its simple ways;
Whoe'er so list, let joy his hours engage:
No gladness e'er has cheered my gloomy days,
Nor moment of repose,
However rolled the spheres, whatever planet rose.

● Quando vede 'l pastor calare i raggi
Del gran pianeta al nido ov' egli alberga,
E' mbrunir le contrade d' oriente:
Drizzasi in piedi, e con l'usata verga,
Lasciando l'erba e le fontane e i faggi,
Move la schiera sua soavemente:
Poi lontan dalla gente
O casetta, o spelunca
Di verdi frondi 'ngiunca:
Ivi senza pensier s'adagia e dorme.
Ahi crudo Amor! ma tu allor più m'informe
A seguir d'una fera che mi stugge
La voce e i passi e l'orme;
E lei non stringi che s'appiatta e fugge.

E i naviganti in qualche chiusa valle
Gettan le membra, poi che 'l sol s'asconde,
Sul duro legno e sotto l'aspre gonne.
Ma io, perchè s'attuffi in mezzo l'onde,
E lasci Spagna dietro le sue spalle
E Granata e Marrocco e le Colonne;
E gli uomini e le donne
E 'l mondo e gli animali
Acquetino i lor mali,
Fine non pongo al mio ostinato affanno:
E duolmi ch' ogni giorno arroge al danno;
Ch' i' son già pur crescendo in questa voglia
Ben presso al decim' anno,
Nè poss' indovinar chi me ne scioglia.

Whenas the shepherd marks the sloping ray
Of the great orb that sinks in ocean's bed,
While on the East soft steals the evening grey,
He rises, and resumes the accustomed crook,
Quitting the beechen grove, the field, the brook,
And gently homeward drives the flock he fed;
Then far from human tread,
In lonely hut or cave,
O'er which the green boughs wave,
In sleep without a thought he lays his head:
Ah! cruel Love! at this dark silent hour
Thou wak'st to trace, and with redoubled power,
The voice, the step, the air
Of her, who scorns thy chain, and flies thy fatal snare.

And in some sheltered bay, at evening's close,
The mariners their rude coats round them fold,
Stretched on the rugged plank in deep repose:
But I, though Phœbus sink into the main,
And leave Granada wrapt in night, with Spain,
Morocco, and the Pillars famed of old,
Though all of human kind,
And every creature blest,
All hush their ills to rest,
No end to my unceasing sorrows find;
And still the sad account swells day by day;
For since these thoughts on my lorn spirit prey,
I see the tenth year roll;
Nor hope of freedom springs in my desponding soul.

E, perchè un poco nel parlar mi sfogo,
Veggio la sera i buoi tornare sciolti
Dalle campagne, e da' solcati colli.
I miei sospiri a me perchè non tolti
Quando che sia? perchè no'l grave giogo?
Perchè dì e notte gli occhi miei son molli?
Misero me! che volli,
Quando primier sì fiso
Gli tenni nel bel viso
Per iscolpirlo imaginando in parte?
Onde mai nè per forza, nè per arte
Mosso sarà, fin ch'i' sia dato in preda
A chi tutto diparte.
Nè so ben anco che di lei mi creda.

Thus, as I vent my bursting bosom's pain,
Lo! from their yoke I see the oxen freed,
Slow moving homeward o'er the furrow'd plain:
Why to my sorrow is no pause decreed?
Why from my yoke no respite must I know?
Why gush these tears and never cease to flow?
Ah me! what sought my eyes,
When fixed in fond surprise,
On her angelic face
I gazed, and on my heart each charm imprest,
From whence, nor force nor art the sacred trace
Shall e'er remove, till I the victim rest
Of Death, whose mortal blow
Shall my pure spirit free, and this worn frame lay low.

CANZONE.

Chiare, fresche, e dolci acque,
Ove le belle membra
Pose colei che sola a me par donna
Gentil ramo, ove piacque
(Con sospir mi rimembra)
A lei di fare al bel fianco colonna;
Erba e fior che la gonna
Leggiadra ricoverse
Con l'angelico seno;
Aer sacro sereno,
Ov' Amor co' begli occhi il cor m'aperse;
Date udienza insieme
Alle dolenti mie parole estreme.

S'egli è pur mio destino,
E 'l cielo in ciò s'adopra,
Ch' Amor quest' occhi lagrimando chiuda;
Qualche grazia il meschino
Corpo fra voi ricopra;
E torni l'alma al proprio albergo ignuda.
La morte fia men cruda,
Se questa speme porto
A quel dubbioso passo:
Che lo spirito lasso
Non poria mai 'n più riposato porto,
Nè 'n più tranquilla fossa
Fuggir la carne travagliata e l'ossa.

CANZONE.

Ye waters clear and fresh, to whose bright wave
She all her beauties gave,—
Sole of her sex in my impassion'd mind!
Thou sacred branch so graced,
(With sighs e'en now retraced!)
On whose smooth shaft her heavenly form reclined!
Herbage and flowers that bent the robe beneath,
Whose graceful folds comprest
Her pure angelic breast!
Ye airs serene that breathe
Where Love first taught me in her eyes his lore!
Yet once more all attest,
The last sad plaintive lay my woe-worn heart may pour!

If so I must my destiny fulfil,
And Love to close these weeping eyes be doom'd
By Heaven's mysterious will,
Oh! grant that in this loved retreat, entomb'd,
My poor remains may lie,
And my freed soul regain its native sky!
Less rude shall Death appear,
If yet a hope so dear
Smooth the dread passage to eternity!
No shade so calm—serene,
My weary spirit finds on earth below;
No grave so still—so green,
In which my o'ertoil'd frame may rest from mortal woe!

Tempo verrà ancor forse
Che all'usato soggiorno
Torni la fera bella e mansueta;
E là ove mi scorse
Nel benedetto giorno
Volga la vista desiosa e lieta,
Cercandomi: ed, oh pieta!
Già terra infra le pietre
Vedendo, Amor l'inspiri
In guisa che sospiri
Sì dolcemente, che mercè m'impetre,
E faccia forza al cielo
Asciugandosi gli occhi col bel velo.

Da' be' rami scendea,
Dolce nella memoria,
Una pioggia di fior sovra 'l suo grembo;
Ed ella si sedea
Umile in tanta gloria,
Coverta già dell'amoroso nembo:
Qual fior cadea sul lembo;
Qual su le treccie bionde;
Ch'oro forbito e perle
Eran quel dì a vederle:
Qual si posava in terra, e qual su l'onde:
Qual con un vago errore
Girando parea dir: Quì regna Amore.

Yet one day, haply, she—so heavenly fair!
So kind in cruelty!—
With careless steps may to these haunts repair,
And where her beaming eye
Met mine in days so blest,
A wistful glance may yet unconscious rest,
And seeking me around,
May mark among the stones a lowly mound,
That speaks of pity to the shuddering sense!
Then may she breathe a sigh,
Of power to win me mercy from above!
Doing Heaven violence,
All-beautiful in tears of late relenting love!

Still dear to memory! when, in odorous showers,
Scattering their balmy flowers,
To summer airs th' o'ershadowing branches bow'd,
The while, with humble state,
In all the pomp of tribute sweets she sate,
Wrapt in the roseate cloud!
Now clustering blossoms deck her vesture's hem,
Now her bright tresses gem,—
(In that all-blissful day,
Like burnish'd gold with orient pearls inwrought,)
Some strew the turf—some on the waters float!
Some, fluttering, seem to say
In wanton circlets tost, "Here Love holds sovereign sway!"

Quante volte diss'io
Allor pien di spavento:
Costei per fermo nacque in paradiso.
Così carco d'obblio
Il divin portamento
E'l volto, e le parole, e'l dolce riso
M'aveano, e sì diviso
Dall'imagine vera;
Ch'i'dicea sospirando:
Quì come venn'io, o quando?
Credendo esser in ciel, non là dov'era.
Da indi in qua mi piace
Quest'erba sì, ch'altrove non ho pace.

Se tu avessi ornamenti quant'hai voglia,
Potresti arditamente
Uscir del bosco, e gire infra la gente.

Oft I exclaim'd, in awful tremor rapt,
" Surely of heavenly birth
This gracious form that visits the low earth !"
So in oblivion lapt
Was reason's power, by the celestial mien,
The brow,—the accents mild—
The angelic smile serene !
That now all sense of sad reality
O'erborne by transport wild,—
" Alas ! how came I here, and when ?" I cry,—
Deeming my spirit past into the sky !
E'en though the illusion cease
In these dear haunts alone, my tortured heart finds peace.

If thou wert graced with numbers sweet, my song!
To match thy wish to please ;
Leaving these rocks and trees,
Thou boldly might'st go forth, and dare th' assembled throng.

CANZONE.

Di pensier in pensier, di monte in monte
Mi guida Amor; ch'ogni segnato calle
Provo contrario alla tranquilla vita.
Se'n solitaria piaggia rivo o fonte,
Se'n fra duo poggi siede ombrosa valle,
Ivi s'acqueta l'alma sbigottita;
E com'Amor la 'nvita,
Or ride, or piange, or teme, or s'assicura:
E'l volto che lei segue ov'ella il mena,
Si turba, e rasserena,
Ed in un esser picciol tempo dura:
Onde alla vista uom di tal vita esperto
Diria: questi arde, e di suo stato è incerto.

Per alti monti e per selve aspre trovo
Qualche riposo: ogni abitato loco
È nemico mortal degli occhi miei.
A ciascun passo nasce un pensier novo
Della mia donna che sovente in gioco
Gira'l tormento ch'i'porto per lei:
Ed appena vorrei
Cangiar questo mio viver dolce amaro;
Ch'i'dico: Forse ancor ti serva Amore
Ad un tempo migliore:
Forse a te stesso vile; altrui se'caro:
Ed in questa trapasso sospirando,
Or potrebb'esser vero, or come, or quando.

CANZONE.

From hill to hill I roam, from thought to thought,
With Love my guide; the beaten path I fly,
For there in vain the tranquil life is sought:
If 'mid the waste well forth a lonely rill,
Or deep embosom'd a low valley lie,
In its calm shade my trembling heart is still;
And there, if Love so will,
I smile, or weep, or fondly hope, or fear,
While on my varying brow, that speaks the soul,
The wild emotions roll,
Now dark, now bright, as shifting skies appear;
That whosoe'er has proved the lover's state
Would say, He feels the flame, nor knows his future fate.

On mountains high, in forests drear and wide,
I find repose, and from the throng'd resort
Of man turn fearfully my eyes aside;
At each lone step thoughts ever new arise
Of her I love, who oft with cruel sport
Will mock the pangs I bear, the tears, the sighs;
Yet e'en these ills I prize,
Though bitter, sweet, nor would they were removed:
For my heart whispers me, Love yet has power
To grant a happier hour:
Perchance, though self-despised, thou yet art loved:
E'en then my breast a passing sigh will heave,
Ah! when, or how, may I a hope so wild believe?

Ove porge ombra un pino alto, od un colle
Talor m'arresto: e pur nel primo sasso
Disegno con la mente il suo bel viso.
Poi ch'a me torno, trovo il petto molle
Della pietate, ed allor dico: ahi lasso,
Dove se'giunto, ed onde se'diviso?
Ma mentre tener fiso
Posso al primo pensier la mente vaga,
E mirar lei, ed obbliar me stesso;
Sento amor sì da presso,
Che del suo proprio error l'alma s'appaga:
In tante parti, e sì bella la veggio,
Che se l'error durasse, altro non cheggio.

I' l'ho più volte (or chi fia che mel creda?)
Nell'acqua chiara, e sopra l'erba verde
Veduta viva, e nel troncon d'un faggio:
E'n bianca nube sì fatta, che Leda
Avria ben detto che sua figlia perde:
Come stella che'l sol copre col raggio:
E quanto in più selvaggio
Loco mi trovo e'n più deserto lido,
Tanto più bella il mio pensier l'adombra:
Poi quando'l vero sgombra
Quel dolce error, pur lì medesmo assido
Me freddo, pietra morta in pietra viva,
In guisa d'uom che pensi, e pianga, e scriva.

Where shadows of high rocking pines dark wave
I stay my footsteps, and on some rude stone
With thought intense her beauteous face engrave;
Roused from the trance, my bosom bathed I find
With tears, and cry, Ah, whither thus alone
Hast thou far wander'd, and whom left behind?
But as with fixed mind
On this fair image I impassion'd rest,
And, viewing her, forget awhile my ills,
Love my rapt fancy fills;
In its own error sweet the soul is blest,
While all around so bright the visions glide;
O! might the cheat endure, I ask not aught beside.

Her form pourtray'd within the lucid stream
Will oft appear, or on the verdant lawn,
Or glossy beech, or fleecy cloud, will gleam
So lovely fair, that Leda's self might say,
Her Helen sinks eclipsed, as at the dawn
A star when cover'd by the solar ray:
And, as o'er wilds I stray
Where the eye nought but savage nature meets,
There Fancy most her brightest tints employs;
But when rude truth destroys
The loved illusion of those dreamed sweets,
I sit me down on the cold rugged stone,
Less cold, less dead than I, and think, and weep alone.

Ove d' altra montagna ombra non tocchi,
Verso 'l maggiore e 'l più spedito giogo
Tirar mi suol un desiderio intenso;
Indi i miei danni a misurar cogli occhi
Comincio; e 'n tanto lagrimando sfogo
Di dolorosa nebbia il cor condenso,
Allor ch' i' miro e penso
Quant' aria dal bel viso mi diparte,
Che sempre m' è sì presso, e sì lontano:
Poscia fra me pian piano:
Che sai tu lasso? forse in quella parte
Or di tua lontananza si sospira:
Ed in questo pensier l' alma respira.

Canzon, oltra quell' alpe
Là, dove il cielo è più sereno e lieto,
Mi rivedrai sovr' un ruscel corrente,
Ove l' aura si sente
D' un fresco ed odorifero laureto:
Ivi è 'l mio cor, e quella che 'l m' invola;
Qui veder puoi l' imagine mia sola.

Where the huge mountain rears his brow sublime,
On which no neighbouring height its shadow flings,
Led by desire intense the steep I climb;
And tracing in the boundless space each woe,
Whose sad remembrance my torn bosom wrings;
Tears, that bespeak the heart o'erfraught, will flow:
While, viewing all below,
From me, I cry, what worlds of air divide
The beauteous form, still absent and still near!
Then, chiding soft the tear,
I whisper low, haply she too has sigh'd
That thou art far away: a thought so sweet
Awhile my labouring soul will of its burthen cheat.

Go thou, my song, beyond that Alpine bound,
Where the pure smiling heavens are most serene,
There by a murmuring stream may I be found,
Whose gentle airs around
Waft grateful odours from the laurel green;
Nought but my empty form roams here unblest,
There dwells my heart with her who steals it from my breast.

SONETTO.

La vita fugge e non s'arresta un'ora;
E la morte vien dietro a gran giornate;
E le cose presenti e le passate
Mi danno guerra, e le future ancora:
E'l rimembrar e l'aspettar m'accora
Or quinci, or quindi sì, che'n veritate,
Se non ch'i'ho di me stesso pietate,
I'sarei già di questi pensier fora.
Tornami avanti s'alcun dolce mai
Ebbe'l cor tristo; e poi dall'altra parte
Veggio al mio navigar turbati i venti.
Veggio fortuna in porto, e stanco omai
Il mio nocchier, e rotte arbore e sarte,
E i lumi bei che mirar soglio, spenti.

SONETTO.

Zefiro torna, e'l bel tempo rimena,
E i fiori e l'erbe, sua dolce famiglia;
E garrir Progne, e pianger Filomena;
E primavera candida e vermiglia.
Ridono i prati e'l ciel si rasserena;
Giove s'allegra di mirar sua figlia;
L'aria, e l'acqua, e la terra è d'amor piena:
Ogni animal d'amar si riconsiglia.
Ma per me, lasso, tornano i più gravi
Sospiri che del cor profondo tragge
Quella ch'al ciel se ne portò le chiavi:
E cantar augelletti, e fiorir piagge,
E'n belle donne oneste atti soavi
Sono un deserto, e fere aspre e selvagge.

SONNET.

Life flies with rapid course that nought may stay,
Death follows after with gigantic stride;
Ills past and present on my spirit prey,
And future evils threat on every side:
Whether I backward look or forward fare,
A thousand ills my bosom's peace molest;
And were it not that pity bids me spare
My nobler part, I from these thoughts would rest.
If ever aught of sweet my heart has known,
Remembrance wakes its charms, while, tempest tost,
I mark the clouds that o'er my course still frown;
E'en in the port I see the storm afar;
Weary my pilot, mast and cable lost,
And set for ever my fair polar star.

SONNET.

Returning Zephyr the sweet season brings,
With flowers and herbs his breathing train among,
And Progne twitters, Philomela sings,
Leading the many-coloured Spring along;
Serene the sky, and fair the laughing field,
Jove views his daughter with complacent brow;
Earth, sea, and air, to Love's sweet influence yield,
And creatures all his magic power avow:
But nought, alas! for me the season brings,
Save heavier sighs, from my sad bosom drawn
By her who can from Heaven unlock its springs;
And warbling birds and flower-bespangled lawn,
And fairest acts of ladies fair and mild,
A desert seem, and its brute tenants wild.

SONETTO.

Se lamentar augelli, o verdi fronde
Mover soavemente all'aura estiva,
O roco mormorar di lucid'onde
S'ode d'una fiorita e fresca riva;
Là v'io seggia d'amor pensoso e scriva;
Lei che'l ciel ne mostrò, terra n'asconde,
Veggio, ed odo, ed intendo: ch'ancor viva
Di sì lontano a'sospir miei risponde.
Deh perchè innanzi tempo ti consume?
Mi dice con pietate: a che pur versi
Degli occhi tristi un doloroso fiume?
Di me non pianger tu: chè miei dì fersi,
Morendo, eterni; e nell'eterno lume,
Quando mostrai di chiuder gli occhi, apersi.

SONETTO.

Gli occhi di ch'io parlai sì caldamente;
E le braccia, e le mani, e i piedi, e'l viso
Che m'avean sì da me stesso diviso,
E fatto singular dall'altra gente;
Le crespe chiome d'or puro lucente,
E'l lampeggiar dell'angelico riso,
Che solean fare in terra un paradiso,
Poca polvere son che nulla sente:
Ed io pur vivo: onde mi doglio e sdegno,
Rimaso senza'l lume ch'amai tanto,
In gran fortuna e'n disarmato legno.
Or sia qui fine al mio amoroso canto:
Secca è la vena dell'usato ingegno,
E la cetera mia rivolta in pianto.

SONNET.

If the lorn bird complain, or rustling sweep
Soft summer airs o'er foliage waving slow,
Or the hoarse brook come murmuring down the steep,
Where on the enamel'd bank I sit below
With thoughts of love that bid my numbers flow;
'Tis then I see her, though in earth she sleep!
Her, form'd in Heaven! I see, and hear, and know!
Responsive sighing, weeping as I weep:
"Alas!" she pitying says, "ere yet the hour,
Why hurry life away with swifter flight?
Why from thy eyes this flood of sorrow pour?
No longer mourn my fate! through death my days
Become eternal! to eternal light
These eyes which seem'd in darkness closed, I raise!"

SONNET.

The eyes, the face, the limbs of heavenly mould,
So long the theme of my impassion'd lay,
Charms which so stole me from myself away,
That strange to other men the course I hold:
The crisped locks of pure and lucid gold,
The lightning of the angelic smile, whose ray
To earth could all of Paradise convey,
A little dust are now!—to feeling cold!
And yet I live!—but that I live bewail,
Sunk the loved light that through the tempest led
My shatter'd bark, bereft of mast and sail:
Hush'd be the song that breathed love's purest fire!
Lost is the theme on which my fancy fed,
And turned to mourning my once tuneful lyre.

SONETTO.

Mente mia, che presaga de' tuoi danni
Al tempo lieto già pensosa e trista
Sì intentamente nell' amata vista
Requie cercavi de' futuri affanni;
Agli atti, alle parole, al viso, ai panni,
Alla nova pietà con dolor mista,
Potei ben dir, se del tutto eri avvista:
Questo è l' ultimo dì de' miei dolci anni.
Qual dolcezza fu quella, o miser' alma,
Come ardevano in quel punto ch' i' vidi
Gli occhi i quai non devea riveder mai!
Quando a lor, come a duo amici più fidi,
Partendo, in guardia la più nobil salma,
I miei cari pensieri e 'l cor lasciai.

SONETTO.

Tutta la mia fiorita e verde etade
Passava; e 'ntepidir sentia già 'l foco
Ch' arse 'l mio cor; ed era giunto al loco
Ove scende la vita ch' al fin cade.
Già incominciava a prender securtade
La mia cara nemica a poco a poco
De' suoi sospetti; e rivolgeva in gioco
Mie pene acerbe sua dolce onestade.
Presso era 'l tempo dov' Amor si scontra
Con Castitate; ed agli amanti è dato
Sedersi insieme, e dir che lor incontra.
Morte ebbe invidia al mio felice stato;
Anzi alla speme; e feglisi all' incontra
A mezza via, come nemico armato.

SONNET.

My mind! prophetic of my coming fate,
Pensive and gloomy while yet joy was lent,
On the loved lineaments still fix'd, intent
To seek dark bodings, ere thy sorrow's date!
From her sweet acts, her words, her looks, her gait,
From her unwonted pity with sadness blent,
Thou might'st have said, hadst thou been prescient,
"I taste my last of bliss in this low state!"
My wretched soul! the poison, oh, how sweet!
That through my eyes instill'd the burning smart,
Gazing on *hers*, no more on earth to meet!
To *them*—my bosom's wealth! condemn'd to part
On a far journey—as to friends discreet,
All my fond thoughts I left, and lingering heart.

SONNET.

All my green years and golden prime of man
Had pass'd away, and with attemper'd sighs
My bosom heaved—ere yet the days arise
When life declines, contracting its brief span.
Already my loved enemy began
To lull suspicion, and in sportive guise,
With timid confidence, though playful, wise,
In gentle mockery my long pains to scan:
The hour was near when Love, at length, may mate
With Chastity; and, by the dear one's side,
The lover's thoughts, and words, may freely flow:
Death saw, with envy, my too happy state,
E'en its fair promise—and, with fatal pride,
Strode in the mid-way forth, an armed foe!

SONETTO.

Nè mai pietosa madre al caro figlio,
Nè donna accesa al suo sposo diletto
Diè con tanti sospir, con tal sospetto
In dubbio stato sì fedel consiglio;
Come a me quella che'l mio grave esiglio
Mirando dal suo eterno alto ricetto,
Spesso a me torna con l'usato affetto,
E di doppia pietate ornata il ciglio,
Or di madre, or d'amante: or teme, or arde
D'onesto foco; e nel parlar mi mostra
Quel che'n questo viaggio fugga, o segua,
Contando i casi della vita nostra;
Pregando ch'al levar l'alma non tarde:
E sol quant'ella parla ho pace, o tregua.

SONETTO.

Nè per sereno ciel ir vaghe stelle;
Nè per tranquillo mar legni spalmati;
Nè per campagne cavalieri armati;
Nè per bei boschi allegre fere e snelle;
Nè d'aspettato ben fresche novelle;
Nè dir d'amore in stili alti ed ornati;
Nè tra chiare fontane e verdi prati
Dolce cantare oneste donne e belle;
Nè altro sarà mai ch'al cor m'aggiunga;
Sì seco il seppe quella seppellire,
Che sola agli occhi miei fu lume e speglio.
Noia m'è'l viver sì gravosa e lunga,
Ch'i' chiamo il fine per lo gran desire
Di riveder cui non veder fu'l meglio.

SONNET.

Ne'er to the son, in whom her age is blest,
The anxious mother—nor to her loved lord
The wedded dame, impending ill to ward,
With careful sighs so faithful counsel prest,
As *she*, who, from her high eternal rest,
Bending—as though my exile she deplored—
With all her wonted tenderness restored,
And softer pity on her brow imprest!
Now with a mother's fears, and now as one
Who loves with chaste affection, in her speech
She points what to pursue, and what to shun!
Our years retracing of long, various grief,
Wooing my soul at higher good to reach,
And while she speaks, my bosom finds relief!

SONNET.

Nor skies serene, with glittering stars inlaid,
Nor gallant ships o'er tranquil ocean dancing,
Nor gay careering knights in arms advancing,
Nor wild herds bounding through the forest glade,
Nor tidings new of happiness delay'd,
Nor poesie, Love's witchery enhancing,
Nor lady's song beside clear fountain glancing,
In beauty's pride, with chastity array'd;
Nor aught of lovely, aught of gay in show,
Shall touch my heart, now cold within her tomb
Who was erewhile my life and light below!
So heavy—tedious—sad—my days unblest,
That I, with strong desire, invoke Death's gloom,
Her to behold, whom ne'er to have seen were best!

Although not eminent in the magnificence of imagery, the sublimity and vehemence required for Lyric poetry, the first of the two following political odes is nevertheless an unequalled model of perfection. The language is lofty, without ambition, and scrupulously elegant without the least shadow of affectation. The lines and sentences flow so harmoniously into each other, that a series of musical tones issue spontaneously from them, and run through the whole of each stanza. The patriotism, magnanimity, and piety, which they breathe, are fraught with spirit and pathos, and yet dignified with a statesman-like gravity, as if the opposite elements of enthusiasm and wisdom were happily allied in the mind of the poet. There is now and then some obscurity; but this is inevitable in a species of composition in which allusions to passing events ought less to be described than shadowed forth with rapidity. Petrarch, moreover, while boldly exclaiming against the policy of living sovereigns, was compelled to preserve some regard, in his expressions at least, for their dignity. The rights of the Emperors over Italy were the ostensible pretexts of the continued civil wars by which their lieutenants, in the different provinces, ravaged their country; while in reality each of them endeavoured to usurp the states of his neighbours, and acquire by his conquests the power necessary to become wholly independent of the empire. Lewis the Bavarian, though acknowledged King of the Romans and successor of the Cæsars in Italy, was absent, poor, and without a military force to reduce to obedience these self-constituted princes, whose government had already become hereditary. He then sold his protection and a few hundred of soldiers, sometimes to one and sometimes to another of the combatants; and faithless alike to all, he generally abandoned the conquered for the conquerors, that he might partake with them the spoils of the Italians. Hence the rather enigmatical allusion to "Bavaria's perfidy" and the exhortation—

" Yet give one hour to thought,
And ye shall own, how little HE can hold
Another's glory dear, who sets HIS OWN at nought.
Oh! Latin blood of old!
Arise, and wrest from obloquy thy fame,
Nor bow before a NAME
Of hollow sound—"

To make such allusions apparent was not the least of those many difficulties which have been mastered by the noble Lady, to whom Petrarch is indebted for the most beautiful translation of the most beautiful of his political effusions.

The second of these odes seems to have been composed in the year 1333, when a new crusade was in contemplation for the recovery of the Holy Land; a project which was afterwards renewed frequently during two centuries, until the days of Tasso, and which was also one of the causes which rendered the "Jerusalem Delivered" the popular poem of Europe. Yet it does not appear that even in the age of Petrarch any prince entertained serious thoughts of undertaking such an expedition; indeed the hero whom he addresses with so much confidence, and whose name it is impossible to divine, is praised more for his wisdom, his eloquence, and rank, than for any spirit of enterprise or military renown. The poet was then but twenty-nine years of age, and the tameness and declamatory tone in which this ode is composed, is but a farther proof of a remark already made—that the perfection of his poetry was the gradual result of long study and frequent failure in experiment. If this ode, in English, appear above mediocrity, it is owing to a young lady, who, interesting herself, like all ladies, in whatever concerns the constant lover of Laura, has devoted her talents to the support even of his political opinions.

CANZONE.

ITALIA mia; benchè'l parlar sia indarno
Alle piaghe mortali
Che nel bel corpo tuo sì spesse veggio;
Piacemi almen che i miei sospir sien quali
Spera'l Tevere, e l'Arno,
E'l Po, dove doglioso e grave or seggio.
Rettor del ciel, io cheggio
Che la pietà che ti condusse in terra,
Ti volga al tuo diletto almo paese:
Vedi Signor cortese,
Di che lievi cagion che crudel guerra
E i cor che'ndura e serra
Marte superbo e fero,
Apri tu, Padre, e'ntenerisci e snoda:
Ivi fa che'l tuo vero
(Qual io mi sia) per la mia lingua s'oda.

Voi cui Fortuna ha posto in mano il freno
Delle belle contrade,
Di che nulla pietà par che vi stringa:
Che fan qui tante pellegrine spade?
Perchè'l verde terreno
Del barbarico sangue si dipinga?
Vano error vi lusinga:
Poco vedete, e parvi veder molto:
Che'n cor venale amor cercate, o fede.
Qual più gente possiede,

CANZONE.

Oh! my own Italy! though words are vain
The mortal wounds to close,
Unnumber'd, that thy beauteous bosom stain,
Yet may it soothe my pain
To sigh forth Tyber's woes,
And Arno's wrongs, as on Po's sadden'd shore
Sorrowing I wander, and my numbers pour.
Ruler of Heaven! By the all-pitying love
That could thy Godhead move
To dwell a lowly sojourner on earth,
Turn, Lord! on this thy chosen land thine eye:
See, God of Charity!
From what light cause this cruel war has birth;
And the hard hearts by savage discord steel'd,
Thou, Father! from on high,
Touch by my humble voice, that stubborn wrath may yield!

Ye, to whose sov'reign hands the fates confide,
Of this fair land the reins,—
(This land for which no pity wrings your breast)—
Why does the stranger's sword her plains infest?
That her green fields be dyed,
Hope ye, with blood from the Barbarians' veins?
Beguiled by error weak,
Ye see not, though to pierce so deep ye boast,
Who love, or faith, in venal bosoms seek:
When throng'd your standards most,

Colui è più da' suoi nemici avvolto.
O diluvio raccolto
Di che deserti strani
Per inondare i nostri dolci campi!
Se dalle proprie mani
Questo n'avvien, or chi fia che ne scampi?

Ben provvide Natura al nostro stato
Quando dell'alpi schermo
Pose fra noi e la Tedesca rabbia:
Ma'l desir cieco, e 'ncontra'l suo ben fermo
S'è poi tanto ingegnato
Ch'al corpo sano ha procurato scabbia.
Or dentro ad una gabbia
Fere selvagge e mansuete gregge
S'annidan sì, che sempre il miglior geme:
Ed è questo del seme,
Per più dolor, del popol senza legge,
Al qual, come si legge,
Mario aperse sì'l fianco,
Che memoria dell'opra anco non langue;
Quando assetato e stanco
Non più bevve del fiume acqua, che sangue.

Cesare taccio, che per ogni piaggia
Fece l'erbe sanguigne
Di lor vene ove'l nostro ferro mise.
Or par, non so per che stelle maligne,
Che'l cielo in odio n'aggia,
Vostra mercè, cui tanto si commise.
Vostre voglie divise
Guastan del mondo la più bella parte.

Ye are encompass'd most by hostile bands.
O hideous deluge gather'd in strange lands,
That rushing down amain
O'erwhelms our every native lovely plain!
Alas! if our own hands
Have thus our weal betrayed, who shall our cause sustain?

Well did kind Nature, guardian of our state,
Rear her rude alpine heights,
A lofty rampart against German hate;
But blind ambition, seeking his own ill,
With ever restless will,
To the pure gales contagion foul invites:
Within the same strait fold
The gentle flocks and wolves relentless throng,
Where still meek innocence must suffer wrong:
And these,—Oh, shame avow'd!—
Are of the lawless hordes no tie can hold:
Fame tells how Marius' sword
Erewhile their bosoms gored,—
Nor has Time's hand aught blurr'd the record proud!
When they who, thirsting, stoop'd to quaff the flood,
With the cool waters mix'd, drank of a comrade's blood!

Great Cæsar's name I pass, who o'er our plains
Pour'd forth the ensanguined tide,
Drawn by our own good swords from out their veins;
But now—nor know I what ill stars preside,—
Heaven holds this land in hate!
To you the thanks!—whose hands control her helm!—
You, whose rash feuds despoil
Of all the beauteous earth the fairest realm!

Qual colpa, qual giudizio, o qual destino,
Fastidire il vicino
Povero, e le fortune afflitte e sparte
Perseguire, e 'n disparte
Cercar gente, e gradire
Che sparga 'l sangue e venda l'alma a prezzo?
Io parlo per ver dire
Non per odio d'altrui, nè per disprezzo.

Nè v'accorgete ancor per tante prove
Del Bavarico inganno,
Ch' alzando 'l dito con la morte scherza?
Peggio è lo strazio, al mio parer, che 'l danno:
Ma 'l vostro sangue piove
Più largamente, ch' altra ira vi sferza.
Dalla mattina a terza
Di voi pensate, e vederete come
Tien caro altrui chi tien sè così vile.
Latin sangue gentile,
Sgombra da te queste dannose some:
Non far idolo un nome
Vano senza soggetto:
Che 'l furor di lassù, gente ritrosa
Vincerne d'intelletto,
Peccato è nostro, e non natural cosa.

Non è questo il terren ch' i' toccai pria?
Non è questo 'l mio nido
Ove nutrito fui sì dolcemente?
Non è questa la patria in ch' io mi fido,
Madre benigna e pia,
Che copre l' uno e l'altro mio parente?
Per Dio, questo la mente
Talor vi mova; e con pietà guardate

Are ye impell'd by judgment, crime, or fate,
To oppress the desolate?
From broken fortunes, and from humble toil,
The hard-earn'd dole to wring,
While from afar ye bring
Dealers in blood, bartering their souls for hire?
In truth's great cause I sing,
Nor hatred nor disdain my earnest lay inspire.

Nor mark ye yet, confirm'd by proof on proof,
Bavaria's perfidy,
Who strikes in mockery, keeping death aloof?
(Shame, worse than aught of loss, in honour's eye!)
While ye, with honest rage, devoted pour
Your inmost bosom's gore!—
Yet give one hour to thought,
And ye shall own, how little he can hold
Another's glory dear, who sets his own at nought.
Oh! Latin blood of old!
Arise, and wrest from obloquy thy fame,
Nor bow before a name
Of hollow sound, whose power no laws enforce!
For if barbarians rude
Have higher minds subdued,
Ours! ours the crime!—not such wise Nature's course.

Ah! is not this the soil my foot first press'd?
And here, in cradled rest,
Was I not softly hush'd?—here fondly rear'd?
Ah! is not this my Country?—so endear'd
By every filial tie!
In whose lap shrouded both my parents lie!
Oh! by this tender thought,
Your torpid bosoms to compassion wrought,

Le lagrime del popol doloroso,
Che sol da voi riposo
Dopo Dio spera: e pur che voi mostriate
Segno alcun di pietate,
Virtù contra furore
Prenderà l'arme; e fia'l combatter corto:
Che l'antico valore
Ne gl'Italici cor non è ancor morto.

Signor, mirate come'l tempo vola,
E siccome la vita
Fugge, e la morte n'è sovra le spalle.
Voi siete or quì; pensate alla partita:
Convien ch'arrive a quel dubbioso calle.
Al passar questa valle
Piacciavi porre giù l'odio e lo sdegno,
Venti contrari alla vita serena:
E quel che'n altrui pena
Tempo si spende, in qualche atto più degno
O di mano, o d'ingegno,
In qualche bella lode,
In qualche onesto studio si converta:
Così quaggiù si gode,
E la strada del ciel si trova aperta.

Canzone, io t'ammonisco
Che tua ragion cortesemente dica;
Perchè fra gente altera ir ti conviene:
E le voglie son piene
Già dell'usanza pessima ed antica,
Del ver sempre nemica.
Proverai tua ventura
Fra magnanimi pochi a chi'l ben piace:
Di'lor: Chi m'assicura?
I'vo gridando: Pace, pace, pace.

Look on the people's grief!
Who, after God, of you expect relief;
And if ye but relent,
Virtue shall rouse her in embattled might,
Against blind fury bent,
Nor long shall doubtful hang the unequal fight;
For no,—the ancient flame
Is not extinguish'd yet, that raised th' Italian name!

Mark, sov'reign Lords! how Time, with pinion strong,
Swift hurries life along!
E'en now, behold! Death presses on the rear.
We sojourn here a day—the next, are gone!
The soul disrobed—alone,
Must shuddering seek the doubtful pass we fear.
Oh! at the dreaded bourne,
Abase the lofty brow of wrath and scorn,
(Storms adverse to the eternal calm on high!)
And ye, whose cruelty
Has sought another's harm, by fairer deed
Of heart, or hand, or intellect, aspire
To win the honest meed
Of just renown—the noble mind's desire!
Thus sweet on earth the stay!
Thus to the spirit pure, unbarr'd is Heaven's way!

My song! with courtesy, and numbers sooth,
Thy daring reasons grace,
For thou, the mighty, in their pride of place,
Must woo to gentle ruth,
Whose haughty will long evil customs nurse,
Ever to truth averse!
Thee better fortunes wait,
Among the virtuous few—the truly great!
Tell them—but who shall bid my terrors cease?
Peace! Peace! on thee I call! return, oh! Heav'n-born Peace!

CANZONE.

O ASPETTATA in ciel, beata e bella
Anima, che di nostra umanitade
Vestîta vai, non, come l'altre, carca;
Perchè ti sian men dure ormai le strade,
A Dio diletta obbediente ancella,
Onde al suo regno di qua giù si varca:
Ecco novellamente alla tua barca,
Ch' al cieco mondo ha già volte le spalle
Per gir a miglior porto,
D' un vento occidental dolce conforto;
Lo qual per mezzo questa oscura valle,
Ove piangiamo il nostro e l'altrui torto,
La condurrà de' lacci antichi sciolta,
Per drittissimo calle,
Al verace oriente ov' ella è volta.

Forse i devoti e gli amorosi preghi
E le lagrime sante de' mortali
Son giunte innanzi alla pietà superna:
E forse non fur mai tante, nè tali,
Che per merito lor punto si pieghi
Fuor di suo corso la giustizia eterna:
Ma quel benigno Re che 'l ciel governa
Al sacro loco ove fu posto in croce
Gli occhi per grazia gira;
Onde nel petto al nuovo Carlo spira
La vendetta che a noi tardata noce,
Sì che molt' anni Europa ne sospira:
Così soccorre alla sua amata sposa,
Tal che sol della voce
Fa tremar Babilonia e star pensosa.

TRANSLATION, BY MISS

Oh! spirit wish'd and waited for in heaven,
That wearest gracefully our human clay,
Not as with loading sin and earthly stain,
Who lov'st our Lord's high bidding to obey,—
Henceforth to thee the way is plain and even
By which from hence to bliss we may attain.
To waft o'er yonder main
Thy bark, that bids the world adieu for aye
To seek a better strand,
The western winds their ready wings expand;
Which, through the dangers of that dusky way,
Where all deplore the first infringed command,
Will guide her safe, from primal bondage free,
Reckless of stop or stay,
To that true East, where she desires to be.

Haply the faithful vows, and zealous prayers,
And pious tears by holy mortals shed,
Have come before the mercy-seat above:
Yet vows of ours but little can bestead,
Nor human orison such merit bears
As heavenly justice from its course can move.
But He, the King whom angels serve and love,
His gracious eyes hath turn'd upon the land
Where on the cross He died;
And a new Charlemagne hath qualified
To work the vengeance that on high was plann'd,
For whose delay so long hath Europe sigh'd.
Such mighty aid He brings his faithful spouse,
That at its sound the pride
Of Babylon with trembling terror bows.

Chiunque alberga tra Garonna e'l monte,
E'ntra'l Rodano e'l Reno e l'onde salse,
Le insegne cristianissime accompagna
Ed a cui mai di vero pregio calse
Dal Pireneo all'ultimo orrizzonte
Con Aragon lasserà vota Ispagna:
Inghilterra con l'isole che bagna
L'Oceano intra'l Carro e le Colonne,
Infin là dove sona
Dottrina del santissimo Elicona,
Varie di lingue e d'arme e delle gonne
All'alta impresa caritate sprona.
Deh qual amor sì licito, o sì degno,
Qua' figli mai, quai donne
Furon materia a sì giusto disdegno?

Una parte del mondo è che si giace
Mai sempre in ghiaccio ed in gelate nevi
Tutta lontana dal cammin del sole:
Là sotto i giorni nubilosi e brevi
Nemica naturalmente di pace
Nasce una gente a cui il morir non dole.
Questa, se più devota che non sole,
Col Tedesco furor la spada cigne,
Turchi, Arabi, e Caldei,
Con tutti que' che speran negli Dei
Di qua dal mar che fa l'onde sanguigne,
Quanto sian da prezzar conoscer dei:
Popolo ignudo paventoso e lento,
Che ferro mai non strigne,
Ma tutti i colpi suoi commette al vento.

Dunque ora è 'l tempo da ritrarre il collo
Dal giogo antico, e da squarciare il velo,

All dwellers 'twixt the hills and wild Garonne,
The Rhodanus, and Rhine, and briny wave,
Are banded under red-cross banners brave;
And all who honour'd guerdon fain would have
From Pyrenees to the utmost west, are gone
Leaving Iberia lorn of warriors keen.
And Britain, with the islands that are seen
Between the columns and the starry wain,
(Even to that land where shone
The far-famed lore of sacred Helicon,)
Diverse in language, weapon, garb and strain,
Of valour true, with pious zeal rush on.
What cause, what love, to this compared may be?
What spouse, or infant train
E'er kindled such a righteous enmity?

There is a portion of the world that lies
Far distant from the sun's all-cheering ray,
For ever wrapt in ice and gelid snows;
There under cloudy skies, in stinted day,
A people dwell, whose heart their clime outvies;
By nature fram'd stern foemen of repose.
Now new devotion in their bosom glows,
With Gothic fury now they grasp the sword.
Turk, Arab, and Chaldee,
With all between us and that sanguine sea,
Who trust in idol-gods, and slight the Lord,
Thou know'st how soon their feeble strength would yield;
A naked race, fearful and indolent,
Unused the brand to wield,
Whose distant aim upon the wind is sent.

Now is the time to shake the ancient yoke
From off our necks, and rend the veil aside

Ch'è stato avvolto intorno agli occhi nostri;
E' che 'l nobile ingegno, che dal cielo
Per grazia tien' dell'immortale Apollo,
E l'eloquenza sua virtù qui mostri
Or con la lingua, or con laudati inchiostri:
Perchè d'Orfeo leggendo, e d'Anfione,
Se non ti maravigli,
Assai men fia ch'Italia co' suoi figli
Si desti al suon del tuo chiaro sermone
Tanto che per Gesù la lancia pigli:
Che, s'al ver mira questa antica madre,
In nulla sua tenzone
Fur mai cagion sì belle o sì leggiadre.

Tu ch'hai per arricchir d'un bel tesauro,
Volte le antiche e le moderne carte,
Volando al ciel con la terrena soma,
Sai, dall'imperio del figliuol di Marte
Al grande Augusto che di verde lauro
Tre volte trionfando ornò la chioma,
Nell'altrui ingiurie del suo sangue Roma
Spesse fiate quanto fu cortese;
Ed or perchè non fia
Cortese no, ma conoscente e pia
A vendicar le dispietate offese
Del figliuol glorioso di Maria?
Che dunque la nemica parte spera
Nell'umane difese,
Se Cristo sta dalla contraria schiera?

Pon mente al temerario ardir di Serse,
Che fece per calcar i nostri liti
Di nuovi ponti oltraggio alla marina;
E vedrai nella morte de' mariti

That long in darkness hath involved our eyes;
Let all whom heaven with genius hath supplied,
And all who great Apollo's name invoke,
With fiery eloquence point out the prize,
With tongue and pen call on the brave to rise.
If Orpheus and Amphion, legends old,
No marvel cause in thee,
It were small wonder if Ausonia see
Collecting at thy call her children bold,
Lifting the spear for Jesus joyfully.
Nor, if our ancient mother judge aright,
Doth her rich page unfold
Such noble cause in any former fight.

Thou who hast scann'd, to heap a treasure fair,
Story of ancient day and modern time,
Soaring with earthly frame to heaven sublime,
Thou know'st, from Mars' bold son, her ruler prime,
To great Augustus, he whose waving hair
Was thrice in triumph wreath'd with laurel green,
How Rome hath of her blood still lavish been
To right the woes of many an injured land;
And shall she now be slow,
Her gratitude, her piety to shew?
In Christian zeal to buckle on the brand,
For Mary's glorious Son to deal the blow?
What ills the impious foemen must betide
Who trust in mortal hand,
If Christ himself lead on the adverse side?

And turn thy thoughts to Xerxes' rash emprize,
Who dared, in haste to tread our Europe's shore,
Insult the sea with bridge, and strange caprice;
And thou shalt see for husbands then no more

Tutte vestite a brun le donne Perse
E tinto in rosso il mar di Salamina:
E non pur questa misera ruina
Del popolo infelice d'oriente
Vittoria ten' promette,
Ma Maratona e le mortali strette
Che difese il Leon con poca gente,
Ed altre mille c'hai scoltate e lette.
Perchè inchinar a Dio molto conviene
Le ginocchia e la mente,
Che gli anni tuoi riserva a tanto bene.

Tu vedra' Italia e l'onorata riva,
Canzon, ch'agli occhi miei cela o contende
Non mar, non poggio, o fiume;
Ma solo amor, che del suo altero lume
Più m'invaghisce dove più m'incende:
Nè natura può star contra'l costume.
Or movi, non smarrir l'altre compagne;
Chè non pur sotto bende
Alberga Amor, per cui si ride e piagne.

The Persian matrons robed in mournful guise,
And dyed with blood the seas of Salamis.
Nor sole example this:
(The ruin of that Eastern king's design),
That tells of vict'ry nigh:
See Marathon, and stern Thermopylæ,
Closed by those few, and chieftain leonine,
And thousand deeds that blaze in history.
Then bow in thankfulness both heart and knee
Before His holy shrine,
Who such bright guerdon hath reserved for thee.

Thou shalt see Italy, and that honour'd shore,
O song! a land debarred and hid from me
By neither flood nor hill!
But Love alone, whose power hath virtue still
To witch, though all his wiles be vanity,
Nor Nature to avoid the snare hath skill.
Go, bid thy sisters hush their jealous fears,
For other loves there be
Than that blind boy, who causeth smiles and tears.

LONDON
PRINTED BY S. AND R. BENTLEY, DORSET STREET.

00066569

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 16 January, 2016